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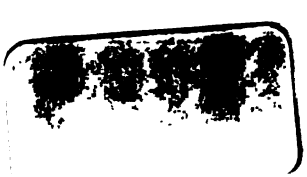

MOTHERS AND SONS.

VOL. I.

MOTHERS AND SONS.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE.

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"TALES OF THE MOUNTAINS," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MOTHERS AND SONS.

CHAPTER I.

FORESHADOWINGS.

A PLAIN, yellow, travelling chariot, with a coronet on the panels, had been standing at a mansion in Hill Street, the town-residence of Lady Fitzherbert, some twenty minutes, when the drawing-room bell rang; soon after which a colossal, powdered footman, followed by a slim, pensive-faced page, issued from their lounge; and, having made secure some trunks handed to them by a valet, and arranged a rich *manteau de voyage* on one of the cushions, re-ascended the steps; then, closing the door after them, the hall-porter consulted his watch, and, seeing that it might be yet another half hour before his young master made his appearance, resigned himself again, nothing loth, to his leather chair, and, with his legs stretched out, and "The Morning

Post" spread open before him, complacently proceeded to make himself acquainted with the last Court news.

Meanwhile, Lord Fitzherbert, after snatching a hasty luncheon, and fortifying himself with several glasses of his favourite old East India Madeira, listened with dutiful attention to the parting counsels of a fond and anxious mother, ere he quitted her roof on what she was pleased to call, "this his first important entrance into life."

Lady Fitzherbert, then in the full bloom of middle age, was still eminently handsome. As Edith Hardwick, *the belle*, and deservedly so considered, of the season, there was not a more beautiful woman of her day. Few, whether with hearts to bestow, or not, could, without emotion, have seen her at the age of eighteen, when, in all the first, fresh blush of maidenly modesty and loveliness, she eclipsed all competitors at one of the most brilliant Court-balls by which Paris was ever thrown into a fever.

At that gay scene it was—lovely beyond compare, the beheld of all beholders, sought by the noblest and the richest, a matchless jewel, throwing into the shade by its dazzling brilliancy every minor gem—that Lord Fitzherbert first saw, became enamoured of, and vowed to renounce the world and all its pleasures, or make Edith Hardwick his wife. Such a sacrifice, however, was not to be. In less than

six months—although from his wealth and position, Lord Fitzherbert might well, even at his age, have sought alliance with the noblest and the fairest—. Edith became his bride.

Her father, Lieutenant-Colonel Hardwick, was a distinguished soldier, had figured—as had his ancestors before him for generations—heroically in his country's service, and ought, if merit had always its deserts, and the Horse-Guards did its duty, to have been a General, at least; but being a minor, and one of five sons, and the family estate, such as it was, going by entail, beyond which—with the exception of the mother's jointure, and a life policy of some ten thousand pounds, which it had terribly tried the old Admiral to keep up—there was nothing, it was up-hill work with him; and, though, could he have chosen a husband for his daughter after his own heart, for he loved her dearly, he would have desired less disparity of years, and rather more congeniality of heart and taste between them, he could not but hail with considerable pride and self-congratulation an alliance so flattering to his vanity, and which promised to be productive of such grand results.

That it was purely a love-match on the old Lord's part is certain; seeing that, beyond her hand and heart, Edith Hardwick had little to bestow. To desire the possession of an object, with Lord Fitzherbert, was to call it his, if in the power of money

to accomplish it. Edith Hardwick's charms were enough to fascinate an imagination far less ardent, and to resolve a will far less uncontrollable, where the object was coveted, than Lord Fitzherbert's.

Nor did the possession of Edith—contrary to his usual wont—in the least diminish the passion which had at first invested her with all that seemed wanting to insure his happiness. To say he idolized her, that she was his all in all, the delight of his heart, the only being he seemed to live for, would not be too much; exercising, as she did, the sweet control over him, even in his darkest and most wayward moods, which, from a woman of so meek and unauthoritative a disposition, could only be ascribed to the wholeness of his love for her, and her title to possess it, both by virtue of her beauty, and what, probably, was of far more avail, her perfect devotion, as a wife and mother, to his interests and happiness.

To do Lady Fitzherbert justice, whatever else scandal—always busy with the beautiful—may have been pleased to amuse itself with, her whole course of conduct, from the moment she plighted her troth to Lord Fitzherbert at the altar, to the last hour of his days, was by common consent—making all due allowances for the inexperience of youth, and the blindness of maternal fondness—unimpeachable. To say she loved Lord Fitzherbert when she married

him, with that whole, and sole, and perfect love her young, warm, impulsive heart might have felt for one of years, and hopes, and tastes more akin to her own, would not be true any more to nature than to fact. But if her unwearied efforts, amidst many trials, for his sake, her devotion to his wishes, her unceasing concern for all that most affected his interests and happiness, to the utter exclusion of self, were not exactly love—such love as a heart like Edith Hardwick's had rich store of for the chosen object of its own free will choice—it was no less entitled—springing as it did, from a source equally pure, to the pride and devotion with which it was acknowledged and responded to by a man, who, however selfish in exacting the full measure deemed due to himself to overflowing, was too sensible and too generous at heart not to be aware of the sort of self-bargain he was making, and the full extent of the sacrifice incurred for that dear self.

Though of a violent and captious temper, suspicious, and jealous almost to madness from the slightest cause, difficult of approach but to the few, exclusive, distrustful, making few friendships, and implacable in his anger and resentments; capricious, so that his nearest and dearest knew not how sometimes to tally with his humour, and giving vent to bursts of passion, when the mood was on him,

frightful to behold—yet Lord Fitzherbert had qualities of heart as well as mind to make a woman love him.

Scrupulously punctilious in all the respectful observances due to her sex, courteous and affable—and few could be more so when it pleased his whim to be agreeable—considerate and generous to profusion, well-read, a pleasant talker, with a versatility of conversational talent, derived more from observation and the shrewd knowledge how best to place it to account, than from any depth of natural genius or acquired learning, and of undoubted courage and veracity, few men had basked more in woman's smiles than Lord Fitzherbert.

His first marriage, when but twenty-four, had not been a happy one. It was scarcely likely that it could have been. The choice was certainly not his own. Policy, politics, paternal acres, and a painstaking, persevering mother had carved out his road to earthly joy; but whether he could not, or would not see it, it was too much all up-hill, or a dull, dreary plain, or lacked the needful agreeables on the way to make it pleasant, or some siren of a side signpost lured him from the track and led him wrong,—somehow, the first Lord and Lady Fitzherbert, of Castlemore, though with the utmost esteem and profoundest respect for each other, lived much apart;

Lord Fitzherbert in Naples, Lady Gertrude in the house in Hill Street; till, falling a victim to the hereditary disease that had been the scourge of her race for centuries, Lord Fitzherbert returned to England; resumed his parliamentary career; and migrating afterwards to Paris, there met Edith Hardwick, as we have seen; and from that moment "his wealth," he used to say, "had purchased him—and well spent too—the first real happiness his heart had ever known."

For fourteen years, might this happiness—all the more precious because it was found late—be said to be Lord Fitzherbert's. It might be, too, that he felt his own deficiencies, and this might have given a zest to its possession. It was his boast—and the sentiment had its unction—that never, since he led Edith to the altar, had he *seriously* differed with her in opinion but *once*, and that was when she insisted on having his portrait taken by an eminent Italian master, as a companion to her own. Leading her, smilingly, to a mirror,—

"Look!" said he, pathetically, "what would your fond folly have me do? Haven't I made myself sufficiently ridiculous already? Arn't they all giggling at the old uxorious beau? You know they are. Make as much of me as you like *now*—I shan't be angry. But, in pity's name, don't set the folks quizzing me by and by when I'm dead and gone;

and there's no one by to defend me." The portrait, however, was taken, whether by stealth or consent is immaterial; and now graces, with its sweet companion, one of the walls of the western gallery of the old Hall in Hampshire, as it ought to do.

For fourteen years, from the hour of their union to the moment when his dying breath pronounced their names, and his eyes closed for ever on the forms to part from which was death's acutest sting, might Lord Fitzherbert be said to be, as far as earth could make him, a happy man; because for twice six years and two—a long jubilee for a spirit like Lord Fitzherbert—he had been governed—wisely, tenderly, truthfully governed, and, yet, seemed all the while himself to rule. There was the secret—there the sovereign talisman that worked such wonders. How many a loving, anxious, suffering wife, complaining, and truly, that she has no power, might with no other reign supreme, and be without a care. O woman, woman! how great thy power, how sure thy influence, hast thou but the skill and grace to use them well!

To wean a heart like Lord Fitzherbert's, even for awhile, from its selfishness; to render it, even for a day, a rational and responsible creature, something better than a mere sensual organ, a thing of kindly attributes and emotions, susceptible of gentle influences, of sympathy and affection; in its generous

interest for others to lose awhile itself; to teach it the grand law on which depends its fate for weal or woe, now and, perchance, hereafter; to raise it from despondency to hope; from darkness, oh, how dark! to light how unspeakably effulgent!—from earth, as 'twere, to Heaven, was no unprofitable work; and well might Lady Fitzherbert treasure the memory of those dying smiles, which, though they found no words to give them utterance, said better, to her far better, than any language could have done—

"Well done, my own beloved! What true joy in life has been my lot was of thy ministering. Death would have no pang, Edith—but that I must part with thee."

The thought of his boy, during the lucid intervals of his last illness, brought on by rheumatic fever, the consequence of long exposure to cold and wet in an unsuccessful essay with some adventurous friends to reach the summit of Mont Blanc, hung heavy on Lord Fitzherbert's heart. Well he knew the wild wayward passions and the ungovernable temper of his child, and often shuddered to think, how he might turn out, left fatherless, and to the guardianship of a doating and indulgent mother; for, however exemplary may be a woman, as a wife—alas! she may be utterly unequal to the management of a heartless, self-willed son.

In some measure to meet the difficulty, and to

relieve his mind, Lord Fitzherbert clung to that last fond resource, the provisions of his will. "The child should never set the lawful authority of the author of his being at defiance; the boy should never break his mother's heart—and prosper. He was an unruly dog; must have a tight hand kept over him, or he'd go to ruin. He should never disgrace his coat of arms if he could help it. He should have a provision suited to his birth and station; but not enough, till he knew how to use it, to bring the Jews about him. And, then, it should depend on his good behaviour whether he enjoyed it long, or not."

"Clermont Onslow, his nephew, was a worthy lad, and deserved his highest favour. He should have it, too. His mother was his only sister; and, though, against his will, she married a man he hated, and without a penny, he would not forget her boy. The Onslows were good blood—no better in the county. Cecil failing, and his heirs male—he was not a strong boy—Clermont would be next of kin. Clermont was a good son—a fine lad—a noble fellow had never caused his mother a single pang. Would have him up, and see what he was made of next winter." And, so, Lord Fitzherbert, much comforted, sat down with his lawyer to dictate his will; the gist and purpose of which, though it spread over three skins of parchment, may be summed up, for all needful uses in view, in a very few words.

After making a munificent provision for Lady Fitzherbert, and giving her his Naples residence, the mansion in Hill Street and appurtenances, all moneys, plate, and securities at his bankers; he left the residue of his property, real and personal—subject to some small legacies—an annuity of five hundred pounds a-year to his sister, Lucy Onslow—and one thousand pounds as a gift to his nephew Clermont, *In Trust*, for his only son and heir, Cecil, when he attained the age of twenty-four; and, after him, for the heir or heirs male of his body, lawfully begotten. His son failing, and his heir or heirs; then, that it should devolve, *In Trust*, to his nephew, Clermont Onslow; and, after him, to his heir or heirs, lawfully begotten; failing all which, it should go—with the exception of a sufficient sum wherewith to erect and found and suitably provide for and furnish twelve Gothic Alms Houses on his Manor of Castlemore, for the perpetual gratuitous life occupation and provision of twelve respectable aged widows; to be called after his beloved wife, in token of his high esteem for her rare virtues and devoted love and affection towards him—the Edith Alms Houses,—to the next of kin, whoever that might be.

In the meanwhile, and until his son Cecil reached the age of twenty-one, an annuity of four hundred pounds a-year was to be paid him quarterly; after which it was to be increased to eight hundred, so

to go on, till he became entitled to the full benefits made and provided for him under the will, at the age of twenty-four.

In a codicil, written in his own hand, after giving some small sums to various old servants and dependants, Lord Fitzherbert suggested—that his son could not inaugurate his majority more nobly and more worthily in his opinion, to please him, than by a present to his mother, on that happy day; of what, had he lived long enough, he had intended should be the gift of his own hand, viz., the Edith Alms Houses—as a token of his dutiful love and gratitude to them both; and which, he was sure, she would prize beyond any other gift whatever he could present her with.

"Now I have done all I can, when it pleases God to call me," Lord Fitzherbert would sometimes say to Lady Fitzherbert during the latter days of his life; when oftentimes the fiery, rebellious temper of their boy, setting all restraint at nought, would trouble him more than he chose to own. "At all events, I have taken care he shall never have the means, from me, to snap his fingers at his mother."

"He would never do it," mildly interposed Lady Fitzherbert, sighing. "He loves me too well. I have no fear."

"And that he may continue so to love you," rejoined Lord Fitzherbert, "I have made it worth his while."

"I think you misjudge him. I am sure you do." would Lady Fitzherbert repeat, her eyes glistening, and with a slight tone of gentle reproof in her voice.

"He must be sent to school," Lord Fitzherbert would continue, after a mutual pause, "or he'll be ruined."

"I quite agree with you, when his health is better," assented Lady Fitzherbert. "He is very far from strong. I think the Spa waters would do wonders for him. Shall we ask Dr. Vaughan's opinion about a tutor? Nugent Harvey is too yielding!"

"Tutor? No—he must go to Harrow."

"Next summer, I think he might do so without danger," acquiesced Lady Fitzherbert.

"He's too much like what I was at his age," pursued Lord Fitzherbert. "But it was thrashed out of me at school—or a good deal of it."

"That's what I dread," returned Lady Fitzherbert; "that dreadful fagging and flogging!"

"Just what he wants. Don't tell me. Will teach him the use of his faculties—teach him the lesson he wants most to learn—to know himself. Does he know himself now? Did he know himself yesterday? he thought I didn't see him—when you wouldn't, and quite right, too, give him the guinea for the meerschaum, and he snapped his fingers, like that, in your face! I say, the Spa waters won't cure that,

will they? By heaven! if he snapped his fingers at me—he knows better. Keep a tight hand over that boy, or he'll break your heart some day."

Whether Lord Fitzherbert himself went quite the right way to work to "keep the tight hand" over his son is very doubtful. Perhaps, like many far-seeing fathers, he was content to point out the dangers; leaving the more pains-taking mother—God help her!—to avoid them, if she could.

"He is so young, and so high-spirited—you must make allowances," pleaded Lady Fitzherbert. "I never saw such a spirit—and so generous! Yourself, your very counterpart. The meerschaum—I'll be bound for it—wasn't for himself."

"No?—for whom then?" asked Lord Fitzherbert, raising his eyebrows, and somewhat mollified.

"I am not sure—but I think," replied Lady Fitzherbert—"the action was so like your own—just what you'd have done at his age—it was for Nugent Harvey."

"D—n Nugent Harvey!" was on Lord Fitzherbert's lips. "He teaches the boy all sorts of extravagances. You'll hardly believe it—I caught 'em the other day playing *écarté* for guinea points—pretty beginning, very! Where the deuce the fellow gets all his money from I can't think."

"Perhaps I *have* been too liberal," acknowledged Lady Fitzherbert, soothingly. "Thinking of what

you often say, 'would you make a boy mean, keep him short of money,' I may have overdone it a little, that's true. I wish you would think of your proposal to make him a regular allowance. It would be so much better. I think that was your own wish?"

"You would double it," smiled Lord Fitzherbert, "the first time the varlet pleaded poverty, or sulked."

"Nay," laughed Lady Fitzherbert, "you are far more likely to do so yourself. Try me. You don't know how stern and strict I can be."

"Well! do as you like about it. If he snap his fingers, though, ever in your face again, don't come to me;"—and, thus having satisfied his conscience, Lord Fitzherbert would mount his horse, and, as he rode gently along, hug himself in the belief how cleverly he had "put the muzzle on that young dog, should he, when he was dead and gone, ever be disposed to shew his teeth, the puppy!"

But Nugent Harvey continued his preceptorial duties, and Master Cecil to become an adept in more things than *écarté* and backgammon; till Lady Fitzherbert, left a widow, Dr. Vaughan, her co-trustee, advised his being sent to Harrow; advice which, coinciding so completely with her husband's last injunctions, it was impossible, though it cost her more sighs and tears than we can count, for her Ladyship to resist.

Certainly, Nugent Harvey's hands were hardly the most desirable in which to continue a youth like Cecil Fitzherbert. Had he been in better, how it might have turned out there is no telling. No doubt, though inheriting all his father's vices, and they were many, and but a portion of his virtues, which were very few, his grace of mind no less than that of person, his fascinating manners, ready wit, unbounded generosity, when it tickled with the whim to give it play, and seeming utter disregard of self, his pride, his indolence, his lavish tastes, his jealousies, enthusiastic likings, and capricious hates—yet were there qualities of head and heart in Cecil Fitzherbert worth developing, had the proper means been used to bring them out.

But there are certain dark, "damning spots" in some hearts, so indelibly stamped, so fixedly rooted, that no alchymy, however potent, can remove them seemingly; spots so inherent, so tenacious, so part and parcel of the soil, so identified with the living structure, that undermine, and corrode, and devour, leaving nothing but a mass of hideous, festering disease—that it were hopeless to attempt their cure. And it was no fault of Nugent Harvey's, if such dark spots were to be found in the heart of Cecil Fitzherbert; nor, that he had no ready antidote for a poison, which, in all probability, was beyond the reach of art, and which, had it not been,

of all men, Nugent Harvey lacked the principle to detect, far less the power to deal with.

After Lord Fitzherbert's death, Lady Fitzherbert lived much in Hill Street, devoting herself, with the aid of Dr. Vaughan, to the improvement of her property, and the education of her son. It not pleasing Master Cecil to remain at Harrow more than six months; or, rather, it not seeming expedient to the authorities there to keep him, by reasons of some ugly acts of insubordination too flagrant for forgiveness, again good Dr. Vaughan had to look out for a tutor.

A tutor was soon found, one Mr. Julius Grimsby, the very antipodes of Nugent Harvey—a stiff, starched, strict, stuck-up man of forms and precedents, embued to the lips with mathematic lore, and a first-class man of Trinity. Here was the very thing. Cecil was indefatigable for a fortnight; when walking, whistling into his mother's boudoir one morning—"Grimsby's going!" said he; and, seating himself on the music-stool, ran his fingers playfully over the chords of the piano, humming an extemporaneous accompaniment as he went on, much to his mother's surprise.

"Going!" exclaimed Lady Fitzherbert. "Mr. Grimsby going? What do you mean? You have not been rude, I hope, to Mr. Grimsby, Cecil?"

"Rude?" cried Cecil. "Bless you, no!" and, whirl-

ing himself round and round to assist his memory, "I told him—let's see—I told him—he was a dirty chap—that's all—to bite his nails—pah!—down to the quick—like a tailor—and—and—of course, I couldn't—and I wouldn't—stand it any longer."

"And you really did say that?" returned Lady Fitzherbert, reddening, and rising from her seat.

"Really *did*," echoed Cecil, going on with his serenade. "And what then?"

"Then, you behaved, sir," replied Lady Fitzherbert, "in an exceedingly rude and ungentlemanly manner; and I desire—do you hear me, Cecil?—I desire that you go immediately—Cecil do you hear me?—that you go immediately, sir, and beg Mr. Grimsby's pardon?"

"Pardon? Oh, crimmini! *I* beg old Grimsby's pardon?" squeaked Cecil, drawing in his cheeks, and expelling his breath with a whistle, "He be hanged! That would be a joke, wouldn't it?"

"Go immediately," repeated Lady Fitzherbert, turning her head, and struggling in vain to maintain her gravity. "Do you hear me, Cecil?"

"O yes! I hear you," laughed Cecil, snapping his fingers. "Don't fidget. There's no hurry, I assure you."

"Do you mean to obey me, sir, or not?" insisted Lady Fitzherbert, recovering herself.

"There, then—I'll be hanged if he has'nt bolted,"

exclaimed Cecil, running to the window as the street-door was slammed hard.—"By Jove!—cut his stick—stole away—yoikes—tally ho!—carpet-bag and all, too, as I'm living—there's pluck! By George! though—how do you know he hasn't prigged the spoons?"

"This is scandalous—intolerable!" cried Lady Fitzherbert, moving towards the bell, but scarcely able to contain herself for laughter all the while.

"If you're going to order your luncheon," said Cecil, "I don't mind having a mouthful with you, too, for I am awful peckish. Bother!—hang old Grimsby—he shouldn't gnaw his nails, then, like a tailor. Don't fret—he'll come for the tin to-morrow—leave him alone for that."

It seemed a hopeless case. Tutor after tutor came and went. Dr. Vaughan was at his wits' end. After Mr. Julius Grimsby, came a Mr. Algernon Drawl, an undergraduate of Brazennose. But Drawl stopped scarce a week—Cecil declaring, "he smelt so horridly of garlic, it was utterly impossible for him to pay proper attention to his studies. His squinting eye, too, haunted him. He couldn't, and he wouldn't stand it any longer."

Then followed a Mr. Albert Percy Hamilton Montgomery Johnson, a very promising and proper person, decidedly pious, but affable to an extent, a good talker, a better listener, *au fait* on most topics,

a correct dresser, had no objection to a good dinner, with just enough fun in him for elegant conviviality, and no more, a first-rate judge of other folks' affairs, and last, but, possibly, not least in Mr. Albert Percy Hamilton Montgomery Johnson's estimation, with a face, figure, and fingers Johnson might well indeed be vain of.

Here was the very man, one would have thought; and so, indeed, did Mr. Johnson succeed in making himself esteemed; till one day, having absently devoured a plate of mulligatawny served up especially for Lord Fitzherbert; and then had the temerity to cast approving eyes on Bella Gordon—an orphan protégée of his mother's, and who, by reason of her extreme beauty and innocence and utter dependence on Lady Fitzherbert, who loved her next her own child, had a peculiar claim on his protection—Mr. Albert Percy Hamilton Johnson felt himself getting small; and, furthermore, it coming to his ears through a favourite, that, in addition to other intolerable slights and inuendos, Cecil had had the insufferable impudence to say that "there must be some cause for it, or that old Johnson wouldn't use so much scent," Mr. Albert Percy Hamilton Montgomery Johnson deemed it most consistent with his dignity, like a dog of gentle blood, not to stand snarling and snapping, mongrel-fashion, but to walk off peaceably, and

thus save himself, as his pupil expressed it wittily, the unpleasantness of being kicked.

Another—and another—and another. 'Twas all one—Cecil was incorrigible. It seemed, indeed, a hopeless case; till, as fortune would have it, up turned Nugent Harvey again one day in the Haymarket. *Ecce homo!* The problem was solved—all difficulty was at an end—the clue was found—and for a time, at least, there was a respite for poor Vaughan. Nugent Harvey was the man—the right man in the right place. Nugent Harvey would bring chaos itself into order. 'Twas a Herculean task; but, in such a cause, stronger than any Hercules would be Nugent Harvey. All now would go on smooth as oil; and it should not be Nugent Harvey's fault, if Cecil Fitzherbert did not turn out, the boast of his tutor, the joy of his mother's heart, and the pride and glory of his country.

And things did now seem really as if they went on oil. Cecil performed wonders—Lady Fitzherbert was transported—and Dr. Vaughan saw no necessity at all to trouble his head another hour. Nor murmur, nor complaint was any more heard from Cecil's lips. But time flew—and Cecil grew to manhood. Even Nugent Harvey at last admitted it was almost time he went to Oxford. There could be no doubt about it. The life was a new one, and had its sweets.

So, radiant with promise—with no wish ungratified, down came young Lord Fitzherbert to Christ Church.

What he there did, or what he did not do, it boots not here to take the trouble to particularize. No doubt he did many things, as thousands have done before and since him, he had better not have done, and left undone many more he had better far have done. 'Tis an old story, and—or parents and guardians wofully deceive us, and homes are oft made desolate for nothing—has been told a thousand times before in vain. Of course Lord Fitzherbert knew his own choice and chances. No tuft ever numbered more tuft-hunter's than Lord Fitzherbert's. Of course Lord Fitzherbert had no objection—was the idol of his party, loved homage, and was over-crammed to surfeit. He could well pay for it. Of course his rooms and taste and hospitality were the themes of every tongue; of course his dinners were perfection, and his wines beyond compare; of course his turn-outs were *ne plus ultra;* of course a first rate fencer was his Lordship, and a first rate shot; of course his wardrobe was the standard and his taste the *mode;* of course he was hardly ever seen in chapel; of course he never read; of course he got in debt, and his mother had to pay it; of course he got into rows—went too far—was rusticated—and Oxford never saw his Lordship more. Of course Nugent Harvey came

timely to the rescue—made it clear to Lady Fitzherbert, more study would have undermined his health,—and, of course, the main question now was what was best for his Lordship then to do?

Nugent Harvey inclined towards a foreign university—Bonn, or Berlin, with a careful English tutor. Lady Fitzherbert rather leaned that way herself. Cecil would have no voice. "What counselled Dr. Vaughan?"

"In the little rural village of Marksbury there was as pretty an old parsonage-house as old England could produce; and there, in the bosom of his family and flock, lived a learned and worthy pastor, under whose guardian wing—might he advise—he would deem it—had he one—a rare happiness to place *his* boy."

"I see — yes — I understand," assented Lady Fitzherbert, thoughtfully. "Odd—the same thought has struck me too. Yes — his cousin, Clermont Onslow, would be a nice companion—yes—and—under the vicar's eye; only—"

"Nonsense!—They are opposites as east and west. I know what you mean. Jealousies? Fiddlesticks! What!—with Clermont Onslow's guileless, gentle, generous nature?"

"You know Cecil's hasty, ardent temper," reminded Lady Fitzherbert. "Annie Lawton, they say, is beautiful."

"And good as lovely," accorded the Doctor. "Yes, —I know it. But what of that? Annie's a blonde, and of the fairest—not Cecil's taste at all."

"That's true," resumed Lady Fitzherbert, after a moment's pause and fetching a deep breath. "That's true. He never admired blondes. Dear boy! Well, then, I don't know anything would please me better than to place him with the Vicar for the next twelve months;—by when—"

"Yes, yes, 'twould be his making," caught up the Doctor. "He must unlearn many things he has been taught, as well as acquire the knowledge of many others he does not know, before he can be as wise and happy as we wish him."

"What does he say to it himself?"

"Likes the idea amazingly, I fancy. Nugent Harvey thinks so, too. He was rummaging out his fly-tackle and shooting gear just now, when I passed his room."

"He was—was he? Very well. You shall write, then, to the Vicar about it, some day?"

"Terms no object?" smiled the Doctor.

"None whatever. Half my fortune—all—all—dear fellow!—would it make him happy! What could I give too much for *that*? If the Vicar will receive him—and he likes it—go he shall."

"Wisely resolved," applauded the Doctor. "Then the deed is done, and Heaven be thanked for all its blessings!"

CHAPTER II.

PARTING COUNSELS.

"PROMISE me one thing?" said Lady Fitzherbert to her son, as, calmly depositing a roll of bank notes in his pocket-book, just presented him by that affectionate parent, and draining his glass, Cecil Fitzherbert sank into a lounge by her side; and looking up into his mother's face, with dutiful earnestness resigned himself gracefully to the little lecture of love which he foresaw, and rightly, too, was in store for him. "Promise me one thi ng?"

"Any thing in the world, my dear mother," returned Cecil, with a suppressed yawn, and playing with the signet-ring on his little finger, "your commands, you know, are law."

"Nay, not my commands," said Lady Fitzherbert, tenderly; "you know I lay no commands on those I love. Say, rather, my earnest wishes, my anxious hopes, my constant study for your happiness."

"Yes, yes—of course," accorded Cecil. "When was I ever ungrateful monster enough to disregard them?"

"Never, I am sure—seriously—meaningly," replied Lady Fitzherbert, laying the slightest emphasis on the words. "I do not say that—you know I never meant that. But you must now seriously and meaningly promise me one thing."

"May I speak and live," bowed Cecil—"what?"

"To keep the mastery," replied Lady Fitzherbert, "over that naughty, impetuous little temper of yours, that has got you into more scrapes—and you know it—than any thing else in your life. Just like your dear father's. I have heard him say so fifty times. I know it was a source of constant regret to him, that, left early to a doting mother's charge—like you are, my child, to mine—her fondness too often got the better of her better judgment."

"A very serious weakness. Spare the rod, eh? and spoil the brat! Naughty mamma!"

"You may smile," said Lady Fitzherbert. "I *do* take blame, and a good deal, too, to myself, very often."

"You do? How unjust! Now, where can you put your finger on a fault?"

"I cannot help sometimes thinking of your dear father's words, Cecil," replied Lady Fitzherbert, sighing.

"Come, now, that's a good joke," laughed Cecil. "What, in pity's name, could father know about rods? He didn't speak from experience, did he? That's always the way with your fathers who never had enough of it themselves—they do lay it on so unmercifully to their sons."

"I don't know exactly how that may be," smiled Lady Fitzherbert through her tears; "but of one thing I am sure—your dear father never advised its adoption at home, Cecil, but in perfect love to you, whatever you may think."

"I am overwhelmed. Proceed, pray."

"That you conform implicitly," continued Lady Fitzherbert, "and cheerfully, to the Vicar's rules in all things, as you ought to do; adapt yourself, as far as possible—and the little personal restraints and self-sacrifices it may at first impose on you will be as nothing to the comfort and advantage you will find from a regular system and method, when you get used to them, as Nugent Harvey says—to Parsonage hours and habits."

"Nugent Harvey says?" echoed Cecil, drawing in his breath, and expelling it again, after a fashion of his own, with a curious whistle.

"Yes, Nugent Harvey," repeated Lady Fitzherbert; "and well said, too."

A slight smile, scarcely observable, and but little

understood by Lady Fitzherbert, played for a moment on Cecil's lip.

"I cannot see the smallest difficulty so far, my dear mother," said he; "nothing can be clearer."

"I was sure you would think so," proceeded Lady Fitzherbert. "That you attend diligently to your studies, too, like a good, dear, sensible boy—having, of course, a due regard to your health—you must not forget that—to which your mare, which I shall send Sam down with on Thursday, will greatly contribute.—By the by, I hope you've not forgotten Dr. Chambers' prescription? The new flannels you'll get down, mind, with your large trunk next week.—And will fetch up, as Nugent Harvey says—and, with talents like yours, my child, where can be the difficulty?—will fetch up—in your case, a mere effort of the will—will fetch up."

"What?" asked Cecil, seeing his mother rather lost for a moment in the labyrinth into which, between his health, and the prescription, and his mare, and the flannel waistcoats, the contemplation of the wonders a mere effort of his gigantic will could accomplish was insensibly leading her.

"You know what I mean—time lost," resumed Lady Fitzherbert, collecting herself; "or, rather, I should say, perhaps, a little misspent and missapplied; I don't say altogether lost."

"I should think not. Who won the Bogley steeple-chase last summer, tell me that?—bagged thirty-two brace and half, before luncheon, with Harvey, at Castlemore last October?—can give him twenty-five at billiards any day, and lick him hollow, nine out of ten, without flukes?—and floored the Doctor, too, yesterday, on the Milton case?—yes, think of that."

"True—*that* I quite forgot," smiled Lady Fitzherbert, "and humbly crave your Lordship's pardon. But now—and listen to me seriously—above all—are you listening?"

Cecil threw himself into a posture of deep attention.

"Above all—that, whatever you do, you get—no nonsensical love-rubbish into your head—do you hear?—at Marksbury?"

"Love-rubbish?" cried Cecil, starting, and with a bewildered look—"gracious! what's that?"

"You may well ask," replied Lady Fitzherbert, a little confused, but struggling to maintain her composure. "True, I needn't have mentioned any such trumpery. You know, Cecil, the wish nearest my heart?"

"You have just, I think, expressed three wishes—three, wasn't it?" asked Cecil. "Was the *nearest* not included?"

"Poh—nonsense! you know what I mean—you know very well."

"Let's see," said Cecil. "Nothing like system and method. Let's see. First—rule my naughty temper—*alias*, be a muff like cousin Clermont—long-shot rather, but within range;—second—up betimes—prayers—rolls and coffee—lessons till luncheon—take a walk—back and say them—*encore* a walk—at five pot luck—eight, souchong and Sally Lunns—scandal and duets—prayers—and, by ten, to roost;—and last, not least—take precious good care not to be casting sheep's-glances at sweet Miss Annie; or suffering sweet Annie to be casting sheep's-eyes at his noble Lordship of Castlemore. O, the audacity! Would she be after doing it then? Just let me catch her! And now, what further wish of her heart has my dear mother left ungratified?"

"To see you married, my child, when the right time comes, as befits your name, and rank, and position in the world."

"And pray what reason," asked Cecil, gazing into his mother's eyes, "has my darling mother to fear, that her dutiful son—heir to the fair Lordship of Castlemore, proud as a peacock, and as rich as Crœsus, would stoop to choose his mate among the plebeian blue, or black, or brown-eyed maids of Marksbury? Nay, nay," added Cecil, seeing

the tears swimming in his mother's eyes, and pressing her offered hand; "you don't think I'm such a ruffian, do you, as to break my Cousin Clermont's heart, even were I spooney enough to contemplate a thought so wild as wedlock? Trust me for that! When Cecil Fitzherbert is hooked, it shall be by a daintier bait, by Jove! than a poor parson's daughter."

"Well, I think I may trust you," said Lady Fitzherbert, smilingly. "The blood of your poor dear father fills too conspicuously those veins for me to doubt you. Not that I would have you proud of that alone. You know I hate false pride. In that the Onslows are all I could desire. *A-propos* of your cousin—I reckon much on your love together. Vaughan speaks highly of him. He is an excellent young man—the soul of honour, like his father, so considerate and kind hearted! I should ever wish you to be on good terms with the Onslows—no better blood in the county. The old Colonel was thrice returned, if I remember right, on the Liberal side, and afterwards came in twice for Linwood. They're poor—the Hampshire Onslows always were. Clermont will have his mother's jointure—the annuity, of course, sinking—but that's not much. You might do something for him, by and by, at Castlemore, if he take to the church. There's the Linwood living, Peter Worthington must be seventy-five, if

he's a day.' You can sound Clermont about it; though I fancy, from what Nugent Harvey said, the Vicar himself has an eye in that quarter. He's ambitious—ever was—no doubt of that. Well, how fast time flies! It must be now more than five years since I saw Annie. She was then a school-girl, in long pinafores, frilled trousers, and a curly crop. Pretty enough for a blonde—certainly pretty—but wanted animation. Girls alter a good deal, no doubt, after twelve; but Annie Lawton must indeed be strangely altered, if she's the beauty now they make her out. A country beauty—quite so—I shouldn't wonder. Mind, give her my love, and say, next spring she must come and see me—a little town-polish would do wonders for her. And Clermont—you'll say how I long to see him, don't forget; and his dear mother, Lucy Onslow. Well, well!—please God, I shall run down and have a look at you all one of these days. Ah! and that's a good thought."

"By George!" exclaimed Cecil, looking at his watch, and starting to his feet—"two o'clock as I live!—and I've to call at Wilkinson's—and to get those things from Buckmaster's—and look in at Nugent Harvey's—and be at Braybrook, by Jove! for 'the Telegraph,' at five."

The last drop was gone from Lady Fitzherbert's cheeks. "God bless you, my child;"; still, although

she had pronounced the same words a dozen times, unable to let go that loved arm; as, having filially kissed her pale cheek again and again, Cecil stood lingering, yet a tender moment more, with the door-knob in his hand. "Good by—God bless you!—You will think, won't you, of all we have been talking of?"

"Yes, yes," said Cecil—"of course I will—you know I will."

"And will write to me very, very often—and tell me—tell me—all about Marksbury—and the Parsonage—and how you like the Vicar—and Clermont—and what you think of Annie, mind—and if you are happy—and—and—"

"Yes—yes—of course—all about it—all—and—"

"And whether you want anything—and if the new flannels fit you—you'll find them a great comfort!—and, by the by—if you have time—you promise me—to call at Savory and Moore's—you will—as you pass—and get the quinine and the cough drops—you promise?"

"Yes, yes, of course, if you wish. But not the least occasion—I have no cough now—it's quite gone."

"But should it return—it's always best to be prepared. And the opodeldoc—you know how you suffered last winter from rheumatism?"

"That confounded damp bed I slept in at Castle-

more—by George, yes!—I shan't forgive Crofts for that in a hurry."

"Let's see—there was something else—my poor head's not worth a button to-day.—Mind—yes—about the sheets at Marksbury—those things are often left to thoughtless servants—though Annie ought to be a good housekeeper by this time—and—and—Esther Lawton— that's true—is a famous doctor."

Cecil looked again at his watch.

"You *must* go. Yes, I know it. And all this time—and I haven't said one half I had to tell you. Ah me! I shall think of it all when you're gone. God bless you!—and here," continued Lady Fitzherbert, her voice tremulous with emotion, and drawing a small parcel from her pocket, "here is a little present I would have you take—and keep—and treasure much, for its own sake, Cecil, as well as mine. It is a small gift—but one, above all others, invaluable—full of precious wealth, and counsel, and great comfort. Never part with it—as my gift, I am sure you never will—and—and—should you ever want a friend—a real, sincere, and steadfast friend, my child—when all else fail you—fly to it! Cecil, fly to it! my dear child—and, though it be all that's left to you—trust to it—wholly—solely—and confidently trust to it—and take a mother's word—it will never—never fail you in your need!"

Cecil took the book; and, once more pressing his

lips to his mother's pale cheek—for it was now almost blanched and cold as marble, as she returned his farewell embrace—placed it in his breast pocket; and, having at length torn himself away, bounded up-stairs to whisper a yet last parting word or two in Bella Gordon's ear, and receive from her hands a little *souvenir* of sweet affection she had just done working for him: when—the last kiss exchanged,—the last look given, he leaped into the carriage, after smiling his adieus through a long line of sorrowing domestics. As it rolled off, Lady Fitzherbert followed it from the window with glistening eyes and a choking throat; till, fairly out of sight, she sank into a chair; and, giving vent to a flood of tears, did more to relieve her poor, pent-up heart of the heavy load had been weighing it down for the last four-and-twenty hours, than if she had had at her call all the specifics for sorrow at Savory and Moore's.

CHAPTER III.

NUGENT HARVEY.

It was to the green door of a sunny-looking, pleasant, bow-windowed house in Jermyn Street, St. James's, that Lady Fitzherbert's travelling chariot rattled up some three quarters of an hour after leaving Hill Street; when, having disposed of Messrs. Wilkinson, and Buckmaster, and, that he might make happy his mother's heart in his next letter, laid in a heavy stock of the cough-drops and opodeldoc at Savory and Moore's, Lord Fitzherbert jumped out; and, proceeding to the first floor, found Nugent Harvey on the landing, all smiles, and joy, and impatience to receive him.

"Are you alone?" asked Cecil, squeezing both offered hands of his tutor, as he paused a moment on the landing for an answer.

"Only Charlie Ferrers," whispered Nugent Har-

vey; "just dropped in for a chat, and to wish you good luck, and Heaven speed you."

"Ah!" said Fitzherbert, "that's kind. Let's see—they may as well take the horses round to Mason's for an hour,—or—what's o'clock?—yes—an hour and a half, then, at farthest. Ah, Charlie, old fellow, how are you?"

Nothing could exceed the affectionate inquiries, and professions, and inexpressible regrets of Charlie Ferrers, on this, perhaps their last meeting for many a day to come. Nothing could exceed the perfect grace and charming affability with which they were received and abundantly returned by Cecil Fitzherbert. It was a little *tableau* worth contemplation, that trio of fond hearts.

Again sighed Charlie Ferrers, "you leave us, then, at last?" Again came forth Nugent Harvey's hands; and again were Cecil's locked prisoners in their grasp. It was a touching scene. People have different ways of giving expression to their feelings. It was the invariable custom with Nugent Harvey, when affectionately disposed, or desirous to create a confidential impression, to make offer of both hands. There is something exceedingly winning in this cordial manner of receiving your friends. Nugent Harvey always approached you with open arms, leaving the way open, too, if you chose to take it, to his heart.

Unlike those inapproachable beings, hedged in

always by such breast-works of imprenetrables, such philosophy, such suspicion, such caution, such defences, such impregnable devices for self-saving, that nothing can surprise them into feeling even, much less open their arms, and take their hearts by storm, Nugent Harvey seemed to know nothing, or, if he did, to scorn the practice of such unchristianly arts of warfare with his species; and, being utterly a stranger to them himself, or so appearing—to not see, or, if he did, to totally disregard them in his commerce with his neighbours.

That he had found his tactics answer very well, it was only to look round him, note his fresh, handsome, placid face, his well-knit, portly form, his pleasant smile, and affable address, his perfect self-confidence and self-composure, the comforts, nay, costly elegances with which he had surrounded himself, and which, unless the fruits of good management, or gifts of gratitude, it was difficult to believe such means as the world gave Nugent Harvey credit for could prudently have purchased—to be sufficiently convinced.

That this openness of arms and heart has its advantages is unquestionable, most conspicuous instances of which stare us in the face every day of our lives. Many live, and thrive, and rise to greater things than Nugent Harvey on nothing else. It is a wonderful card into the good graces of your fellow-men; with some natures irresistible. That Nugent Harvey had

found it answer exceedingly well was evident. There is one thing—it was agreeable to him, sat gracefully on him, was part and parcel of his very nature, and every one acknowledged it becoming. There was no apparent art, no effort in it, no aim, no practice. Without taking the least unfair advantage, it threw you off your guard, and kept you so, as long as it thought fit. With whatever circumspection you approached Nugent Harvey, at all events you felt that there was none on his part; that, however cold and cautious you might be, from him you had to fear neither reservations nor repulse.

Once within the magic circle of his open arms, you not only found the way straight, and, if you would, in a moment to his heart; but, however fortified, as you might flatter yourself, with self-defences, were pretty sure, ere you withdrew from that encircling friend, not only to enlist its warmest sympathies, but to make it the depository of your dearest thoughts and cares. To say that Nugent Harvey thus knew his power, and used it to advantage, would be but to admit that he simply, like other master minds, to make himself the ruler of his species, studied their weak points. 'Twas a study that answered well, or Nugent Harvey never had pursued it.

Still, spite of open arms and open heart, accessible, apparently, beyond nine men out of ten, all single-mindedness, seemingly, and truth, and candour, few

men were in reality less known than Nugent Harvey, and fewer, in reality, less loved. If ever there was a man walked through life in a mask, it was Nugent Harvey. True, he had shown much judgment in its selection. It was perfect of its kind, admirably got up, of exquisite finish, became him wonderfully, and fitted to a T. So inimitable was it, that on more than one occasion it had nearly deceived himself. Nugent Harvey, with all his penetration, took himself in sometimes. His mask was such a master-piece of art, it even gulled itself. No wonder that he thrived. And, if Nugent Harvey hardly knew himself at times, his friends might well be pardoned if they were occasionally obliged to look at him twice before they could make him out. But then it might be only when his mask went a little awry, got loose, or wanted touching up.

A key, they say, may be found to character in many ways. There is a lady advertises, that she will tell you yours, gentle reader—yes, yours, we are in earnest—if you will only send her your hand-writing, and fourteen penny stamps. 'Tis a bagatelle for such a bargain. Your character for fourteen pence! Mercy on us! pay it, and be thankful. A good deal may be gleaned, if you grudge the one and twopence, by your walk, your conversation, your dress, your address, your knock at the street-door, the decorations of your rooms; but as good an index as any, perhaps, is your

way of shaking hands. If not a great hypocrite, it is worth all the others put together.

You may crowd your rooms to suffocation with ornaments for which you have no taste, because you think it fashionable so to do; your step may be bold, or shuffling, according to the state of your purse, or the humour you are in; the knocker may fall loud and resolute from your fingers, or slip timidly through them, as if you were a mendicant or tax gatherer, as your health and errand may give them nerve, or otherwise. The handwriting of the greatest hero that ever marched undaunted to the cannon's mouth would often not disgrace a lady's billet-doux; while Mr. Goosey Green scribbles off foolscap-sheets-full to his *innamorata* in characters terrific to behold.

There is no dependence to be put in any of them. But your shake of the hand speaks volumes. Some give you a finger; some two; some three. Each has its significance. One leaves no impression at all; another just the least in the world, and no more; another plunges you in doubt what to think; while your hearty, unmistakeable wring of the fist clears up all misgivings, fairly brings the tears into your eyes —a certain token that your heart overflows—and, like the "quality of mercy" which "is not strained, but droppeth like the gentle dew" &c, graces "him that gives," no less than him that takes."

No wonder, then, if Nugent Harvey, thus cogita-

ting, prided himself so highly on his gifts—gifts so full of grace, and from which fell so many fruitful harvests on their owner. Who would not open wide his arms and heart to clutch one half the like? But, though the road be short and straight, on every side a perfect *parterre*, and with nothing to impede or tire on the way, it does not follow that the goal attained is worth the pains to reach it. Accessible as was Nugent Harvey's heart, eager as hundreds were to call it theirs, what was its honest value, truly, when they'd got it?

To say that Nugent Harvey had never loved, with a pure and holy love, any living being, would, though very near, not be quite the truth. Nugent had loved his mother with a child's fond, dependent love; till, when scarcely twelve years of age, death took her from him; from which hour his heart would seem as if it had never found for itself a resting point. Whatever natural yearnings, as a boy, he might once have felt for him as his parent, his father had never shared any great part of his affections.

From infancy, Algernon Harvey, for no assignable cause, except that the boy would never take to him, had ever treated his son with marked harshness and indifference, oftentimes with ill-concealed aversion, and always with severity uncalled-for. Why he should so have done is strange, as Nugent, in the main, shewed many buds of fair and fruitful promise,

and those charms of mind and person, which, one would have thought, had they been rightly nurtured and improved, would have made him a useful, no less than a pleasant companion in his after exile.

Rumour accounted for it in more ways than one, though rumour in this, as in many other instances, no doubt, went wide very often of the mark. Some said, the father's heart was buried in the grave of his only girl, Eva, whom he loved tenderly. Others, that, though a handsome youth, and a general favourite, Nugent veiled under a specious front of self-non-consideration, a cold, callous, calculating heart; whereas, his father was all open-heartedness, and open-handedness—a friend, alas! to every one but himself. Others, that he had had cause for jealousy on his wife's account, a woman of gay and dashing habits, and never looked at Nugent with the feelings of a father. Whatever might be the cause, love there was none between Algernon Harvey and his only son.

To do Nugent justice, his father's rule, if not iron and arbitrary, as he said, and calculated hour by hour to widen rather than lessen the breech between them, was, at least, very capricious, and provocative of any thing but mutual confidence and love. And, though allowances, and many, for fits of spleen, and despondency, and impatience—the bitter fruits of unavailing sorrow, sad reminiscences, the gloomy retrospect of time mis-spent, and precious opportunities for ever

lost—might, in charity, by indulgent friends be made, they were too frequent, too systematic, too palpably selfish, look at them as you would, to be laid, with any justice, always to the charge of the unoffending boy.

If Nugent, indeed, had even been as unamiable and unfilial as his father in his dark moods made him out, truly, he was to be pitied, a vast deal more than censured. It is a melancholy fate for any English youth, especially a youth of Nugent Harvey's tastes and turn of thought, when—driven by necessity, no matter how incurred, from his rightful titles—his father is cast a *refugee* on foreign shores. It is lamentable to see how the fertile brain, *in extremis*, casts about it, and finds pretexts for its follies and absurdities. But French masters, German tutors, professors of every accomplishment under heaven, though qualifying for the commission, the squirearchy, or the coronet, are but sorry antidotes for the poison that is imbibed with every draught of the Circean alien-cup.

Nor may the appointment of the father, though to the chaplaincy of the Court of Brussels, Bruges, or Spa, or Bonn, or Baden, make things better. Saw you ever, feeling as you ought, the holder of a British chaplaincy on foreign shores, without a heartache? It is, at best, but a theme for slender congratulation. Ought he to be there? Would he be there if he could help it—if he could do better? What has

brought him there? Algernon Harvey had often, doubtless, as he ascended his alien-pulpit, brought the same queries to many a thoughtful mind. Algernon Harvey knew it, too, and, though he did his best to master it, felt it keenly. He felt—he could not but feel, reminded of it as he was at every turn—that he was *not* where he ought to be. But there was no help for it, which made the sting the deeper. It was the penalty, the just, the inevitable penalty for the law's infringement—the righteous law, to which, although to the world's eye he strove to appear indifferent, in heart he humbly bowed and cowered.

It is a saddening picture. He ascends the desk, he sees all eyes upon him—he knows their thoughts—they are busy on the chaplain. He has risen that day, perhaps, in better spirits—the post has brought him, possibly, hopeful news at last—his heart beats lighter—he has dressed with greater care—his neckcloth is unspotted, and his hair looks some shades less grey, even to himself. Perhaps that is why they stare. He distinguishes familiar faces among his flock. They seem to scan him curiously. Why stare they so? Dark spectres dance before his eyes—his heart beats thick and fast—back fly his thoughts to the old rectory—his once honoured, happy home—the little village, sheltered in its sequestered nook by the hill-side—his parish—his parishioners—and the duties, in fulfilling which life was

then indeed a pride to him,—his temples burn;—his brain reels—all is vague and indistinct around him; yet, he sees—he feels those familiar eyes still scanning him,—he knows not what he does—he leaves out verses in the psalms—forgets the collect—mangles the communion—and, somehow getting through his task, flies to his cheerless hearth—there to hear next day, mayhap, that he was intoxicated, or mad, or utterly unfit; but to know in secret, and in sorrow, how truly, alas! he spake, who said—whatever other cures philosophy may perform—"who shall minister to a mind diseased?"—and, ere long, that at the earnest solicitation of some zealous member of his little flock—in all likelihood the very blackest of the fold—he is to be superseded by his bishop, and sent, penniless, a wanderer on his way.

But if Algernon Harvey was wanting in that due love for his son, as well as regard for himself, which, under happier auspices, he might have felt, it must be granted, to his credit, that he did what he could to give him such education as was within his reach. Nor did Nugent miss the opportunities thus placed at his command. Many a first-rate scholar as Bonn and Berlin have turned out of their cloisters, it may with truth be said, that no Englishman had ever acquitted himself, under foreign tutorage, with more splendid honours than Nugent Harvey; and when, his terms over, he sought his father's dying blessing, he pos-

sessed in himself, independent of the little all coming to him from his mother's two hundred pounds a-year, finer ground-work for a fortune, than if that lamented parent had bequeathed him, instead of the payment of his funeral rites, the fee-simple of the whole of Hollyhurst.

To be cast, as was Nugent Harvey, on the world an orphan, and, with the exception of a maternal uncle who cared nothing for him, friendless before the age of twenty-two, was a critical position for a young man of his tastes and temper to be placed in. But Nugent Harvey had to rely upon himself—was proud—loved money—power—and saw but one path, by which to grasp them, adapted to his ends. Nugent sought his uncle—went to Oxford—pursued his plan—kept open house—raced—hunted—shot—was loved, caressed—yet, took a *double first.* Nugent never troubled his uncle more.

The world was now open to Nugent Harvey—"his oyster," he would say, "which he would dispose of at his pleasure;" and, taking down a well-thumbed volume of his favourite oracle, set to work to make himself master of the shortest ways and means. It was but to throw himself heart and soul into a cause, with Nugent Harvey, to come off victor, if within the power of resolution to be conqueror. Nugent Harvey knew his game, had taken his cue, and with a bold stroke would win it, too. How he first went

to work, it boots not now to inquire. Suffice it to say, his game worked well. Practice makes proficient, and Nugent Harvey cared not to be idle. But his work, though it brought in golden fruits by handfuls, had assumed no systematic form, no definite object; till, falling in with Lord Fitzherbert—on a grand tour with Sir Gilbert Wimpole's son, in Naples—so favourable an impression did he make on Lady Fitzherbert, that nothing would do, when his engagement expired with Sir Gilbert, but that he must, renouncing all others, devote himself to the pleasant task of making a perfect prodigy of Cecil.

Nothing could have turned up, at the moment, better pleasing to Nugent Harvey, and we have seen how he acquitted himself, and with what results, so far. His game with Cecil Fitzherbert opened a fine field. If bold strokes and skill could do it, there was no danger of the issue in his hands. But the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; otherwise, the Nugent Harveys of this world would be gods, indeed, on earth.

Perhaps the only living being, besides his mother, who had ever really interested Nugent Harvey, was Cecil Fitzherbert. He admired the lad, not from any loving impulse, but because he was high-born, rich, refined, eminently handsome and intellectual, gratified his pride, and was necessary to his ambition, of costly tastes, habits somewhat congenial

with his own, and a temper tractable in his leading only. He might have loved him more, had he been of rank and fortune inferior to himself, for there was much sympathy of thoughts between them. But their friendship, Nugent foresaw, was not likely to outlive very long the period of his minority, and there were richer fruits far to pluck between them than the mere blossoms of congenial hopes could promise.

Thus yearned Nugent Harvey's heart towards his young pupil, when, as if in echo to Charles Ferrer's pathetic "you leave us, then, at last?" forth came, as usual, both his hands, producing incontestible evidence, if that were needed, most indisputable, of how the case stood, as was evident by the tears almost in Cecil's eyes.

On leaving Lady Fitzherbert's house, when Cecil went to Oxford, Nugent Harvey was at fault for awhile, whether to embrace a tempting opportunity that offered to make another prodigy of the heir to a Scotch dukedom, or to attach himself as secretary to a foreign embassy, either of which posts he felt competent to fill. But Lady Fitzherbert's sufficient reasons for wishing him still to keep an eye and hand over Cecil, without seeming in any way to too narrowly scan his movements, and Dr. Vaughan's perfect concurrence, which would save him so much trouble, added to Cecil's irreconcileable regrets at the idea of

losing such a treasure, and his own deep, fixed regard which made it no less imperative to keep his pupil well in sight, prevailed at last.

Having turned the matter over quietly in his mind, Nugent, after breakfasting confidentially with Cecil at his club, sallied forth next day, took a suite of rooms forthwith in Jermyn Street, furnished them splendidly, and, setting to work, it was not long before Nugent Harvey made them all that bachelor-heart could wish. With his usual good taste, his chief aim was to combine the *utilia* with the *dulcissima*—the utmost amount of elegance with the utmost amount of comfort. Though, hitherto, the greater part of his life had been spent abroad, and in a country where, least of all, its definition is understood, no one better knew the real meaning, in its best sense, of that little word, comfort, than Nugent Harvey. And he was determined, too, to prove it, now he had the chance.

Unlike too many of our modern exquisites, who deem the best ornaments to their chambers to consist in flashy patterns, gaudy mountings, ginger-bread jew-gaws, indecent statuettes, and pictures that would blush for themselves, but for their shameless familiarity with their bold beholders, Nugent Harvey's most licentious exhibitions would not have raised a blush on the cheek of the coyest maiden of sixteen.

However keen an eye and warm appreciation Nugent Harvey might have for female charms—and

no man prized them higher—he was perfectly well aware of the all-potent secret on which depended their true and lasting power over us. He knew the danger of too near a knowledge—too great familiarities; that with beauty, more than anything else, there is far more interest in what is gracefully hidden than unblushingly revealed; and he had too much regard for it, as well as for himself, to be always putting it to a test, which, the greater its merits, the more it always shrinks from, and which, with impunity, the most perfect can ill bear.

Nugent Harvey prided himself, and with some reason, on the good taste of his rooms. There was all that comfort could collect together, and elegance give a grace to. New paints and papers were indispensable. The last tenant, a Captain Harkaway, cared little, out of hunting season, but for colouring meerschaums, sherry-cobbler, and taking lessons on the cornet. There must be a regular rout out. Nothing would please Mrs. Lennox better. Soon clever artists were hard at work, remodelling and re-embellishing. Mrs. Lennox rubbed her eyes, and declared—"it was lovely—it was beautiful!"

"Would Mrs. Lennox have the kindness to display her taste in the selection of the borders for the panels?"

Mrs. Lennox's taste, ever correct, agreed exactly with Mr. Harvey's. So, on went the work, more lovely—more beautiful than ever.

"What did Mrs. Lennox think of the sweet, pale pink satin hangings that now enriched her walls, set off only with that rich, chaste white and gold border, wasn't it perfection?" "And the rich-flowered, pale pink silk-damask curtains to match the walls; and the rich, pink silk-damask chairs and sofas to match the curtains; and the bird's-eye mapled, deep gilt moulded doors, and tinted ceilings; and the luxurious little couches, and the curricles, and the lounges, and the lazies; and the consoles, and the cabinets, and the marbles, and the marqueterie, and the pictures, and the porcelain, and those two little loves of parroquets there on the tripod in the corner, and those exquisite antique Sèvres, and beautiful Dresden vases, and that gem of a table, too, and that darling carpet and rug, those gorgeously bound books, and those splendid Indian screens?"

"It was lovely—beautiful all—it was perfection!"

And so—if we may judge by his placid smile of perfect self-content—thought Nugent Harvey, too. Money had evidently done much, as Mrs. Lennox said; but, as Nugent Harvey thought, good taste much more. As to one thing there could be little difference of opinion between them—there Charlotte Lennox was right—"It was only to be a privileged visitor of Mr. Nugent Harvey's, to know, indeed, what was what, and who was who; and, if that was not

sufficient commendation, Charlotte Lennox did not know what was."

Now, indeed, might the first grand coveted step in Nugent Harvey's career be said to be attained. Nugent Harvey had a home—an elegant, nay, an enviable home—a home, too, of his own achievement. 'Twas an inspiring thought. A home, O! how much better than those of thousands, who—and with prospects how much brighter—had had the start of him—a good, long start—a clear course—and so nobly mounted too. Where were they now? And, as he gazed on the work of his own hands, so full of pride and cheering promise—he might be pardoned if he sometimes leant rather a more ready ear than seemed consistent with his usual self-command, to the flattering tongue of Charlotte Lennox, till he almost fancied himself at times, we fear, the perfect being that Charlotte made him out.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROLL OF BANK NOTES.

"So, you're off, then?" sighed Charlie Ferrers, with a half-laughing, half-lachrymose look, peculiar to him when in the humour for banter; "off, really and truly, at last? Going to set us quite an example? what a good boy!"

"And high time, too—don't you think so?" smiled Cecil, directing a note he had just written, bearing the superscription:—Miss Bella Gordon, at Lady Fitzherbert's, Hill Street, Berkeley Square."

"And quite the man of business, too, I declare. It reflects the highest credit on you, Harvey."

"Thank you," said Harvey. "I am fully sensible of it."

Charlie burst out into a horse-laugh; but, as this was an ordinary accompaniment to almost everything he said or did that tickled his fancy, neither Cecil

nor Nugent Harvey took more notice of it than to exchange a smile with each other.

Charlie Ferrers, as he was always called, was an odd compound, made up of an indescribable *mélange* of good and bad qualities, the good, left to themselves, perhaps predominating. There was, however, some of the right stuff in his head and in his heart, too. Nay, he could talk and reason occasionally with a gravity you would have scarcely anticipated from those two twinkling little grey eyes, that sensual mouth, and sottish, rollicking laugh; and, though the dram-bottle and the dice-box had done a good deal to vitiate a naturally good-natured heart, it was not so selfish but that there were times when he had been caught lending a kind ear, and a hand, too, when they were wanted, at a pinch.

But Charlie had to be taken in the humour. Gay as a lark one hour, Charlie could be, the next, moping and misanthropic as an owl; full of fun to overflowing, when it hit his fancy, with flashes of wit and harmless satire would set the table in a roar; but, come the dark cloud over him, dispirited, and dull, and downcast in a moment, as if he had all the cares of the world upon his shoulders, and then he could be sour and savage as a bear;—then, up again, all life, and light, and ebullition, and exuberance, come, anything to tickle him, like his

favourite beverage, and creaming over with excess of jollity and jokes.

Principle enough, to resist temptation, Charlie had very little. There was his weakest point—there it was he fell. Charlie could contend, and manfully, with many ugly things, and come off conqueror. He could contend with debts, and duns, low funds, low spirits, sickness, shame, and sorrow; but, then, they *were* ugly, and Charlie hated ugly customers. But temptation was not ugly. It was beautiful—very fair, and full of charms, for Charlie. Charlie could not hate what was charming—no, not he. In his sober moods, or when cousin Rachel took him to task sometimes, no one could promise fairer than Charlie Ferrers.

His intentions, while the weight of anxiety or the necessity for reformation was on time, were beyond praise; his morning resolutions left only to be desired that his evening convictions would honour them as they ought. Whether Charlie's good purposes were exactly of the sort with which, they say, the way to a certain place is paved, we know not; we hardly think so. Seeing they were so often changed, sometimes for better as well as for worse, it is to be hoped they were of a quality that lead to a happier result than that assigned them by his far-seeing, but, may be, too anxious, hasty friends.

It was no sin, certainly, as he said, if Charlie loved fun, and a good laugh better than a lecture; though he often got one, and deservedly, too, from Cousin Rachel, who, but for his reckless extravagances and dissolute habits, but, above all, the disreputable nose his *penchant* for the bottle was fast giving him—palpable as light to every eye but his own, and which not even *her* love for him could excuse—might have given him her hand, and with it thirty thousand pounds, every shilling of it her own. As for her heart, as kind, and good, and generous a one as ever beat in woman's bosom, every one knew he had possessed that all to himself, the ruffian! ever since the age of sweet fifteen.

What could he be thinking of? But Charlie, with the finest chances open to him, could not, or would not see them; or, perhaps, saw other things he fancied better; and so, roving from flower to flower, from sweet to sweet, on—on he went—careless of the morrow, so long as the honey of to-day held out—making life but one great universal holiday—one selfish, sensual feast; till, surfeited, and, getting grey and good, he threw himself one day at Cousin Rachel's feet.

Cousin Rachel once had loved him—loved him truly; but love, even such love as Cousin Rachel's, has its limits. Cousin Rachel had grown cool; or, perhaps, if not cool, more cautious; or, it may be,

the sight of those lack-lustre eyes, once so bright and beaming, and that disreputable nose, and that sensual mouth and sottish look displeased her. Cousin Rachel demanded time for prudent thought. Charlie had no time to grant. Duns were pressing. If creditors would wait, he wouldn't mind a bit. Still hesitated Rachel; till off flew Charlie in a huff, and, putting the Channel between them, snapped his fingers at his foes.

A remittance from an unknown hand soon brought Charlie home again. Should he throw himself again at Rachel's feet. Oh, what a nose! No, no—he could not—dare not do it. By heaven! he would bring down that jolly nose—would spite her—and marry Ellen Mowbray. Should he go and get it over? He would just ask Nugent Harvey first. That true friend was not at home. Charlie Ferrers left his card. Next day saw Nugent Harvey in Bury Street; whan, walking in unannounced, there was Charlie, sitting with the dice-box in one hand, in the other a pack of cards, deep in the study of some mystic problem.

"Got it, by Jove!" cried Charlie, jumping up from his seat, and slapping his thigh in high glee.

"What?" asked Nugent Harvey.

"Look here," grinned Charlie, his nose turning all manner of rosy tints with agitation. "Done it by G—, Sir!"—and, drawing their chairs to the table,

in a minute after up started Nugent Harvey, too, and, patting him on the back—

"So you have, by Jupiter! Clever dodge *that*, by the powers! Charlie," said he.

No more was heard about spiting Cousin Rachel. Ellen Mowbray had not a shilling. It was out of the question altogether. Cousin Rachel, let her alone, would come to by and bye, sure as a gun. By George, but he'd got it now. Let her look out. Noses be hanged! Knew a dodge, by Jove! worth two of that."

Here was an acquisition, here a talent to be turned to rich account. Nugent Harvey saw it at a glance; and to see, and to resolve, with Nugent Harvey, was —where the end was worth it—one and the same thing. Charlie Ferrers was the man, the very man he wanted. Charlie must have had no common claims to stand well in Nugent Harvey's eyes. And Charlie's own heart was too big a great deal to go on long and cheerily without loving somebody or something. New schemes, too, require money to set them going; and—if he saw his way clear—Nugent Harvey's interest for his *protégés* was unbounded. Besides which, Charlie was an agreeable companion, and an entertaining guest. He shone brilliantly at his little select suppers, and, being well-connected, brought friends worth knowing round him, and kept them round him, too. Charlie lived but for to-day,

or Nugent Harvey had found it troublesome to keep pace with his restless wants. With the champagne at his elbow, however, Charlie had no compunctions, and at Nugent Harvey's, at fit seasons, he could swim in it if he chose.

"Going to set us all quite an example," whimpered Charlie.

"Too late for incorrigible dogs like us to profit by, I'm fearing, Master Charlie," sighed Nugent Harvey.

"Well, hang it! I don't know," said Charlie. "How old, now were you, then, Harvey, when you cut *your* wise teeth?"

"How old were you," replied Harvey, "when you cut *yours?*"

"O! wasn't my tutor a brick of a fellow, that's all? Let's see—early I think—twenty-five."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Harvey, "you surprise me. That *was* early!"

"But you're not going to be quite spooney, now, are you?" giggled Charlie, turning to Cecil, who, having thrown himself into a reading chair, was turning over the leaves of a magnificently bound new "Book of Beauties," on his knees. "You will think of old faces sometimes, eh?—and ask leave to write to us now and then—now, won't you?"

"Won't I, that's all," smiled Cecil. "How they can call Lady Paulina Pensive pretty, I can't think. The little lump of affectation!"

"Rather," agreed Nugent Harvey. "Go on; you'll come in a moment to Amy Sinclair—a splendid creature!"

"Was," growled Charlie, "before she got so deuced fat—there's no fitting her."

"That's better," said Cecil, turning over the leaf, and struck with the beautiful face that seemed to look at him fondly as he gazed—"a sweet, natural, artless smile that."

"Ah! Rachel Ferrers," cried Harvey. "Yes! if they were all like Rachel, they might call it a 'Book of Beauty,' and no mistake."

"Pooh!—bother!—beauty be hanged," grunted Charlie, pulling up his neckcloth, and rubbing at his nose. "Handsome is as handsome does, I say. Bother your beauties! 'Gad, they're vain enough, by Jove! without sticking them all up there together to be stared at. It isn't modest!"

"I was thinking of getting Bella Gordon in next year," said Cecil to Nugent Harvey; "but if that's so—if it isn't 'modest.'"

"By George, yes!" cried Charlie—"good thought that. Sweet creature! Yes—and Ellen Mowbray, too—dash my wig! so we will. Won't that take the shine rather out of Rachel?"

"But if it's not 'modest,' eh?" reminded Harvey.

"Blarney, and be hanged to you!" roared Charlie. "Modest enough, yes, for a sweet bunch of early May flowers, may be, the like o' them; but not for your bundle of fat, full-blown roses there, done budding and blushing, or ought to have, long ago; and should be thinking of shutting up, instead of cocking their heads there so saucy—and ready to fall to pieces every moment. But, I say, though—how about *The* Rose—the sweetest rose—sweetest of all—The Rose of Marksbury;—eh, my Lord Fitzherbert?—what of the Maid of Marksbury?"

"Don't!" implored Cecil; "don't now, there's a good fellow!"

"Well, then—you'll be sure to write to us, won't you? and tell us all about her. Oh, I can fancy! And what time you get up—go to prayers—breakfast—say your lessons—pot-luck it—tea and Sally Lunns—hunt the slipper—and off to roost?"

"A full, true, and particular account, depend on't."

"That's a brick! And how you like the home-made bread and butter,—the vicar's sermons—they're awful clever,—and when they milk the cows,—and, mind, how many pigeons Annie Lawton keeps—and if they love her, the little darlings! don't forget—and perch on her shoulder, too—and nestle in her bosom—and pick the cake-crumbs from out her rosy lips;—and, by the bye, if Tabitha Ludlam, the post-

mistress' hooked nose is as sharp as ever,—and what sort of a new bonnet the Squire's lady's got on now,—and when you see old Huntworth—jolly old Lowndes, you know—who gave Jem Shipton the three months more at the wheel for robbing his hen-roost, because the bumpkins cheered him when he got off the Fernleigh poaching case,—ask him if he remembers Charlie Ferrers, and the Ghost of Heathfield copse. That *was* a spree! He'll tell you all about it—ask him—over a glass of grog;—and what sort of a fellow Clermont Onslow is—bit of a muff, eh?—sweet on Annie, isn't he?—Oh, I can fancy!—Damœtas and Menaleas."

"Hear him!" cried Harvey, coming in with the neck of a champagne bottle in each hand, and depositing them on a side table laid with choice refreshments. "A poet born, as Cousin Rachel says, that he is, every inch of him."

"What—tilting on the vicar's little lawn?" went on Charlie. "Mercy on us, Harvey! how is it to end?"

"No more displays, vain boaster, but begin!
I prophecy beforehand, I shall win."

"Rhymer, come on! and do the worst you can,
I fear not you, nor yet a better man."

"Hear, hear!" cried Cecil. "Yes, how indeed?"

"As all such feats of love twixt loving cousins should end, to be sure," said Nugent Harvey—

> "So nice a diff'rence in your singing lies,
> That both have won, or both deserv'd the prize.
> Rest equal happy both; and all who prove
> The bitter sweets, and pleasing pains of love."

"So now for a glass of champagne, say I, and Annie Lawton's health, if you like, in a bumper."

Charlie's eyes sparkled. The very pop of the first cork sent a thrill of unspeakable pleasure through his heart, and fresh fun flashing to his brain.

"Can't you fancy of a lovely summer's evening," said he, draining his third glass—"can't you fancy, the deep blue sky without a cloud—the roses, and the jasmines, and the honeysuckles all out—the linnets, and the goldfinches, and the skylarks warbling round—and the honey-bees humming home, heavy-laden from their errands of industry—can't you fancy?"

"Hear, hear!" cried Cecil.

"And the wether-bell tinkling—and the brook sweetly murmuring—and the ring-doves cooing—can't you fancy?—I can—drinking tea, and eating strawberries and cream under the old weeping ash! Ah! and the new milk from the cow—and the home-made bread and butter—and the custards, and whip-syllabubs—just think of it!"

"How about the caterpillars and lumbago?" demurred Harvey, replenishing the glasses.

"They be hanged!" laughed Cecil. "With a wide-awake, and the opodeldoc, bother take *them!*"

"Then, see the deal of good you may do in the country," continued Charlie, "in a quiet, unostentatious way. None of your Lady Bountifuls; but real, pure, disinterested, Christian charity."

"That's your sort," applauded Harvey; "your good Christmas coals, and coverlids, and candles, and camesoles, and little comforts."

"Yes—yes!" cried Charlie, "and the sick-bed ministerings—and the sorrowing-heart sympathizings—and the spirit-broken soothings—and the heavy-laden helping hand—and—"

"The soups, too, don't forget," said Cecil, "Saturdays and Wednesdays. And the gruntings and grumblings—'cause, as how, the parson feeds hisself on vermicelli, and the poor on only peas."

"Shew me the very best and noblest of human institutions," exclaimed Nugent Harvey, "without their abuses. Perhaps the nearest approach to perfection—touching the point—that I know of, as a system, is at Marksbury; where Scroggs, the relieving officer, makes it a rule—and not a bad one either—to give the largest loaf to the *last* comer."

"I'll tell you what," said Cecil,—"I suspect very much, that what we dole out to poverty so mag-

nanimously, as a boon, might with justice, if every one had his rights, be nine times out of ten claimed friend Harvey, as a right."

"I have often thought myself," echoed Charlie, "were it destined there should be a grand, fresh, universal start for the prizes, which would come in winners—those now in possession, or those not?"

"A most interesting, but difficult question to decide," observed Nugent Harvey, "and involving some curious considerations. No doubt the fresh contest would afford some very edifying exhibitions."

"By jingo! shouldn't I amazingly like to be there to see it," laughed Charlie, cutting off a slice of cold tongue, and refilling his glass and Cecil's to the brims. "Rather a good spree that, by Jove!—a new Grand Human Derby, eh?"

"No doubt many a startling discovery would be made," pursued Nugent Harvey; "many a favourite look rather small, I fancy; and many a great unknown be brought to light."

"Exceedingly amusing, wouldn't it be?" agreed Cecil. "A sort of Grand Human 'Derby' day for all comers, great and small, of all ages and pedigrees, good, bad, or indifferent, in merry England."

"The select few, eh?" smiled Harvey, "having had it all to themselves pretty well long enough you think?"

"By jingo! what a lark!" cried Charlie, washing

down a mouthful of cold fowl with a couple of bumpers of still Sillery. "Only fancy—the odds—the start—the off at last—the half mile—the turn—the set to—the whipping—spurring—neck and neck—the in—the rush—the 'which has won?'—Nugent Harvey's awful phiz, as Smith and Jones gave his Lordship the go-by; and Brown left Sir Upstart Addlehead crest-fallen in the ruck—cricky jinks!"

"More amusing, I'm inclined to think, than edifying," said Harvey. "How often would you have the new 'Derbies?' The worst of it is, the best horse don't always win."

"Because," suggested Cecil, "perhaps they won't always let him, if he could."

"There's something in that certainly," agreed Harvey, smiling. "It must be in the great universal race alone, you mean—no favour nor affection—that, in the end, the grand struggle must come off?"

"Well, I suppose it must," assented Cecil. "There's no doubt, it's there the best horse will be found in the long run."

"Yes—yes!" cried Charlie, "that's the ticket. But not an hour longer, by Jove! I say, than he's worth his oats!"

"What, when he's too old, and stiff, and groggy," groaned Nugent Harvey; "or—"

"Lazy," growled Charlie.

"With the memory of a thousand brilliant services

giving lustre to his name," continued Nugent Harvey, "cast him off—put him in a 'Hansom'—or send him to the knacker's, Captain Ferrers?"

"Forbid it, heaven!" cried Charlie. "Gad! let *me* catch 'em at it. Release him from his harness, eh boys?—pat him kindly—turn him out to graze at peace—be a model, poor old cretur, still to cast from—before he has done anything to discredit his name and lineage. 'Them's my sentiments, Gents,' as Mr. Jenkinson says—and here's success to 'em!"

"Well, I don't know," said Nugent Harvey, lighting a cigar; "but I'm inclined to think, if it comes to the push, blood must win it after all. Nothing can stand against blood in the long run. Your clumsy cross-breds are all very well as machiners—good, strong, useful sort of animals in harness; but they terribly want driving. Ye gods and little fishes! how they can snort, and plunge, and caper, and kick up the dust, when they've flung their rider. Only give them their heads—and, mind you, get out of the way of their heels, that's all. Now, if I must be ruled and ridden over—which seems reasonable, by one or the other,—hang me, if I wouldn't a precious deal rather it should be by a lord, then, than a labourer."

"Why so?" asked Cecil, knocking the ash off his cigar into a Sèvres saucer.

"Don't you recollect last Lynwood election, when

they threw over the old Colonel; because they said he was 'a slow coach'—twenty years behind the age—not up to his work—wouldn't vote for the Manchester boys—pitch his 'Mantons' into the fire, and hang his dogs; but stuck to old faces, and to Church and State, and his pheasants and partridges, and his tenants, and they to him, like a brick, as he ought to do? and returned that roaring, rambling, rodomontading son of a—Bully Braggerman. Mercy! how he did talk. Didn't he come it strong, about what he would do, and what he wouldn't. By Jove, Sirs, 'twas as good as a play to hear him,—how he'd stand no nonsense—not he!—but stir 'em up, and rout 'em out, and give the people—his darling people—every one of them their rights and titles to a man—fight for them to the last drop of his blood—nail his colours to the mast—and perish, aye, perish, before he would desert them;—just look at him now he's in."

"Fights for the loaves and fishes, don't he, like a good one," grinned Charlie. "Leave him alone for that. 'Pon honour though—I'm almost inclined to think—'twixt friends—I should do the same."

"They *would* have their 'people's' man," continued Nugent Harvey; "they *would* have the 'right man in the right place,'—don't they wish they'd got him?"

"They *would* back their own pet, eh?" smiled Cecil, "and he has flung them,—how ungrateful!"

"Then, look at the lies he tells," laughed Charlie, exchanging a glance with Nugent Harvey. "That *is* the worst of your democrats—they *do* tell such lies, confound them!"

"Rather, that's the best of them," suggested Cecil; "give them rope enough, eh?"

"By George! how very like old Lawton!" exclaimed Charlie, suddenly bending over a chair-back, and following some one with his little grey groggy eyes, as far as he could down the street—"couldn't possibly be old Lawton, could it?"

Cecil looked at his watch, and so did Nugent Harvey.

"I wonder," said Charlie, "why they always call the old Vicars, in the story-books, silver-haired, and silver-tongued?"

"Out of respect that one feels, of course," explained Nugent Harvey, "for those venerable symbols of wisdom and experience."

"Now, I'll be sworn, come to that," cried Charlie, "you'll see, in your time, fifty-fold more clerical old pates, bald and burnished as an ivory door knob, or with half a hand-full of respectable iron grey, than garnished either with silver locks, or, come to 'ken 'em close,' as Alan Fairfield says, with silver tongues, long, either. And that poetical chap there, who's always lauding them up to the skies, with all his blarney, has just bought himself another bottle of hair-dye;

and, if that don't do, means—the hypocrite—to wear a wig. Oh, the deceitfulness of this wicked world!"

Nugent Harvey again proved his watch by the old time-piece on the mantelshelf.

"You can spare me for half-an-hour?" said he, addressing Cecil affectionately, and in a tone of annoyance as if the thought bothered him. "I must just run round into Sackville Street before post. Shall be back again directly."

"Shall cry our eyes out," whimpered Charlie, "if you don't make haste."

"There's more champagne there, in the ice outside, if you want it," condoled Harvey, taking up his hat and gloves.

"Bye—bye," sobbed Charlie. "I say though, lend us a pack of cards—just for a game at 'beggar my neighbour'—while you're gone?"

"For *love*, of course. Well, if you'll promise that; only—if any one come up—"

"Bye—bye—honour bright!" nodded Charlie.

"Not bad at all that," smiled Cecil, as he heard the street-door closed.

"Hate cards like poison, by daylight, don't you?" said Charlie, dealing out the pack into two parts. "Wonder who the deuce invented 'beggar my neighbour?'"

"Three for my King, if you please," laughed Cecil.

"Expect you'll not come off winner very often, though," giggled Charlie, "with Annie Lawton, op-

posite, for a partner. There goes my Jack, then, confound it!"

"Odd, that they shouldn't have a fool as well as a knave in the pack," said Cecil.

"Well, they do say," laughed Charlie, "don't they, that wherever the knave is, the fool's not far off."

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Cecil, "in the least."

"Fire away," cried Charlie. "Two for your queen. Go it—that's your sort—four for my ace. Ah, Jack again! Dash my buttons!—knave for knave—there's a joke. Ace, by the powers! One, two, three—bah! Ace again—one, two.—Knave—now isn't that droll? Go it, ye cripples—one, two, three—King—bother!—go along with you—bah!—take 'em up. At 'em again—one, two, three, four, five—Jack of clubs—the deuce!—stumped out, by jingo!—there's a pretty kettle of fish!—oh, the fickle Goddess!

> "Why will I woo thee to my arms,
> Why for thy transient favours pine?
> Better rely on Circe's charms,
> Than trust to smiles as false as thine."

"Slow rather, isn't it," yawned Cecil, as a turn in game No. 2 placed a heap of small hearts in his hand.

"Law, no," said Charlie, rising, and fetching in a fresh bottle of champagne out of the ice. "Exciting to a pitch, that 'beggar my neighbour,'—makes

you awful dry, though. Did Harvey ever shew you the trick Plumley taught him the other day?"

"No," said Cecil, draining his glass. "Bet you ten to one I'll shew you a better trick than that."

"Ah! mustn't bet," reproved Charlie, brimming the glasses, "against rules."

"He be hanged!" said Cecil, throwing down a sovereign.

"Don't be rash!" advised Charlie.

"Ten, if you like, old fellow."

"Not in luck to-day,—no, no," said Charlie, tossing off glass after glass. "It's cruel—dead cruel, to take advantage of me."

Cecil took the cards—shuffled them—then gave them to Charlie to shuffle, too. Cecil specified three cards that he would draw.

"Can't do it," grinned Charlie.

"Twenty to one," cried Cecil.

"Done!" cried Charlie.

"What do you think of that?" said Cecil, throwing down the three cards.

"Dash my wig!" cried Charlie, chucking the sovereign over, "that's a corker! Come, now—" taking up the pack—"I'll bet you five hundred to fifty, if you like, you don't tell me how I do this;" and, desiring Cecil to name twelve cards, he produced them, sure enough, from a clean pack, one after the other, very much to Cecil's wonder.

"What will you take to tell me that trick?" asked Cecil.

"Nothing," grinned Charlie. "But I'll tell you what I'll do,—only mum to Harvey,—cut you ten times, for anything you like. If I win—you know the trick; if I lose—you don't,—that's fair?"

"Done!" cried Cecil, in whose brain the champagne was now working all sorts of whimsical devices. "What's it to be?"

"What you like."

"Done for ten, then."

The old Venetian clock struck the half hour, by when Nugent Harvey was to have returned; but on went the cutting. Another half hour ticked away, and Cecil still cut—and cut;—but Nugent Harvey came not.

"Been detained," said Charlie, "that's evident. Long-winded chap that Houghton Palmer. Or gone down to Clement's Inn to see him—not unlikely."

"Cleaned out, by George!" cried Cecil, dashing down the cards. "Now, what's the bargain worth, old chap?"

"What's it worth, my boy? Drat it, then, I'll shew you," hiccupped Charlie, snatching up the pack.

Charlie Ferrers was most unquestionably getting very drunk, or he would have known better than, even for the cool hundred he now folded up and deposited in his pocket-book, to have shared with any

living soul but Nugent Harvey, far less with Cecil Fitzherbert, a secret, which, in his sober senses, for his own sake, he would not have breathed even to the winds.

"Do you see these cards?" asked Charlie, making an effort to articulate distinctly.

"Yes, of course," said Cecil, not being quite sure which pack exactly was meant; as, although there was but one on the table, it seemed strewed all over with diamonds and spades. "That's the—that's the—knave."

Charlie made another attempt to prove to Cecil, that it was not the knave he pointed to—but himself.

"Then—that's it," said Cecil—"that—" and crash went a magnificent crystal flower-vase, at his elbow, to the ground.

Charlie laughed; and, in his attempt to pick up the fragments, somehow overbalanced himself, and fell heavily on his side.

A slight knock, repeated after a short interval, was heard at the door.

"Come in!" said Cecil, having with some difficulty got Charlie up into a chair.

Mrs. Lennox had merely stepped up to say, that Lord Fitzherbert's carriage had been waiting half an hour; and the boys were afraid they should

be too late for the 'Telegraph,' if they did not start soon.

"By George!" said Cecil, "yes—thank you—that's true—be ready in a moment;" and, Mrs. Lennox having withdrawn with many apologies—immediately granted—for having taken the liberty; "Charlie," said he, "promise me one thing."

"One thing?—anything, my dear fellow," hiccupped Charlie. "Want any money?—bless you—only just to ask. Know Charlie Ferrers—don't you?—a brick—reg'lar brick, by G—."

"No," said Cecil, the fumes of the champagne beginning to go off. "All right enough, old fellow, about that. Won't say anything about it, though, to Nugent Harvey? Don't want my mother to be bothered."

"Bless your heart!" cried Charlie, attempting to rise;—"not the least fear in the world. Blab?—Law!—now—you don't think Charlie Ferrers 's the boy to blab?—Blab!—Charlie blab?"

"Good bye!" said Cecil, shaking hands. "Remember, you owe me—for value received—one hundred pounds' worth, isn't it?"

"That's it, my boy!—that's it!" cried Charlie, struggling to reach the table, "Come along—I'll shew you a dodge—come along.—Charlie the boy to chop double? Look here then."

"Not now," said Cecil, calmly. "Another time. When I want your secret, Charlie, you shall tell me. Farewell!"

Gaily rattled the post-boys, pleased enough to get fairly off, with their noble charge up Jermyn Street.

Cecil Fitzherbert threw himself back in the carriage, a prey, for the first time, perhaps, really in his life, to many anxious thoughts. His heart smote him. Not for the loss of the roll of bank notes, his mother's parting present, though that reflection could not be otherwise than very saddening; but for the falsehoods which he foresaw he must have recourse to with that fond mother, to replace them.

Scarcely could Cecil have reached the top of Piccadilly when Nugent Harvey let himself into his lodgings with a latch-key. Charlie Ferrers was lying fast asleep, snoring on the rug; while the remnants of the feast, and the flower-vase, and the state altogether of the whole room left him in no doubt as to what had been doing in his absence. Gently moving the burly form of his prostrate friend with his foot, and rather scandalized, as he might well feel himself, by such an exhibition, at that time, too, of the day,—

"Get up, do," said he, "and don't lie snoring there like a beast."

"Oh—ah—hollo!" yawned Charlie, starting up. "You—is it?—sure? Where the deuce did *you*

come from? Beast, eh? Now, don't you be calling names. Wouldn't advise you. Don't stand that. The beast 's worthy—eh—of his hire—isn't he?"

"Let's see," said Nugent Harvey. "Can't take a joke."

Charlie, shaking his head—his usual mode after a carouse—which seemed to revive him wonderfully, and regaining his legs, placed his pocket-book in Nugent Harvey's hands.

"Pretty well for a beginning," smiled Harvey, patting him on the shoulder. "But this love for the wine-cup, Charlie, must, and shall be conquered. Yes, I say conquered; or, as sure as Heaven, you'll die in a garret, or a mad-house, Charlie Ferrers. Nearly five, by Jove! Now go, there's a good fellow—take some soda-water, and put on a white choker;—and, if you're a good boy, I'll take you with me—there then—to the Bible Meeting to-night at Exeter Hall."

"Whew—die in a garret—and all for love of Annie Lawton," laughed Charlie, throwing his hair off his forehead and arranging his cravat by the looking-glass; "never—you don't say so?"

"Fact," said Nugent Harvey, putting the table into a little order, and collecting the scattered crystal fragments; "as sure as fate."

"How about these?" asked Charlie, winking his eye, and seizing a pack of cards; then giving them

that peculiar sharp crash, so musical and exciting to gambling ears.

"How about those?" repeated Nugent Harvey, listlessly flacking the dust off his boots with his pocket-handkerchief. "Well, what about them?"

"Only, you didn't say," said Charlie, brushing his hat with his coat sleeve—"or, if you did, I didn't hear you—but that's all one—what *they* will bring me to—did you?"

"To comfort and consideration, it's to be hoped," replied Nugent Harvey, a slight smile of contempt curling his lip, "if you only play them soberly and well."

"That *is* encouraging," laughed Charlie. "Thank you kindly."

"But you see, my dear Charlie—you see," continued Harvey, very blandly,—"it would never do to dash—you see—*fœcundi calices quem non fecere disertum*, eh?"

"Yes—that's right—see that," said Charlie—"right there, by Jove!"

"You see, my dear fellow—all depends in this world, on having your weather-eye wide open always, and your wits about you. Is there any harm in a convivial glass at fit and proper seasons? Did I say so? You know better. No—drink, and—"

"Be d—— to you, eh?" roared Charlie.

"Fie, fie! Drink, my dear fellow, till you're

blind, if you like—when there's no work to do; but, you see—I am sure you do—that love for the wine cork's the devil, Charlie—for—for—"

"Setting the tongue wagging, eh?" cried Charlie. "Sweet innocent! Law, bless you!—not a bit of it. Says I to myself, says I—

"When the wine flags,
Then the tongue wags.

"Bless you!—Charlie Ferrers the boy to blab over his bottle? Dash my wig, then—do you see any green in the white of Charlie's eye?"

"Didn't twig the trick—did he?" asked Harvey, lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "He's as sharp-eyed as a lynx."

"He!" giggled Charlie. "Oh, you incorrigible naughty! I say—do you see any green in Charlie's eye—honour bright now?"

"No green exactly," acknowledged Nugent Harvey, after a moment's scrutiny; "but I do—and that's the truth—and so I tell you—see—something else there."

"Ah, bones of my ancestors! and what's that?" roared Charlie. "Nothing personal, now, you understand—don't stand that."

"What the soda, and a basin of cold water, and white-choker, my boy," patting him on the back, "will soon remove, there's not a doubt of it."

"Any forking out, eh?" asked Charlie, holding the door knob in his fist.

"Well," said Nugent Harvey, "of course you do as you like—I give five."

"Five?" cried Charlie. "Excellent man! Dash my buttons!—that's *carte blanche* for us both, by jingo!—and a card to her next ball, too, from Lady Robert. Think not, though, to night—excuse me."

"Yes," said Nugent Harvey to himself, as Charlie slammed the street door after him; "as sure as Heaven—yes—you'll rot, Charlie Ferrers—rot—in a garret, or a mad-house,—and richly serve you right, too. *Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt.*"

CHAPTER V.

"HIS WILL BE DONE!"

On leaving a fond and anxious mother's roof under the circumstances we may suppose did Cecil Fitzherbert,—the home of his infancy, of his riper youth, and, up to manhood, would he but have used it as he ought, the source, and scenes of by far the happiest hours of his life, hard indeed would have been his heart had he, in reality, felt as insensible as he seemed to the loss, in one sense, he was sustaining. Little as the countenance can be taken as a correct index of the heart's workings, especially in those strange natures, as they are called, so apparently cold and unimpassioned, when the fever is not on them, so deep, so impenetrable, so unsusceptible, that nothing can, seemingly, fathom or affect them; still less can their words or actions be relied

on as any sure evidences of the spirit within, or of the peculiar sort of intricate mechanism of the many hidden springs that give it action.

There seems, in some youthful hearts, a settled purpose, a boastful pride, a sort of flippant glory, in keeping in subjection every disposition but the right. Truth, modesty, simplicity, ingenuousness, patience, submission, piety, filial affection, and considerateness, as qualifications, are for fools and muffs. Let them be grateful—they need no richer heritage, if they use it well. And what is left for the knowing and ingenious? Wish them joy of *their* acquisition; it is all they will have to boast of.

As, at birth, the hair receives from nature the dye it is to take, which no power can sensibly alter without destroying its vitality, are we to conclude that she has also stamped upon the heart, indelibly, the marks, for fair, or foul, by which its peculiar characteristics shall be known? Are we to say, that it would be as hopeless to remove the plague-spot there imprinted, as to make the locks black, white, red, or brown, according to our pleasure?

If so—poor, fond, foolish mother there, with your first-born on your lap!—gaze not so proudly on that treasured idol of your heart. What availeth all your care? Note you it not? No, you cannot see it; 'neath such cherub smiles as those what that is

harmful can lurk hidden? Poor, fond, deluded one! pray—if that be so—if no art of yours can cleanse of its stain that heart on which you build your proudest dreams of earthly joy—pray—not for the many many years in store of life prolonged you now are asking; but that, ere another day may make that foul stain darker, deeper—your baby-boy, your treasure, O, how treasured! may be taken—yes, taken from you, who cannot save it, into His care and tender keeping, whose blood alone *can* cleanse from every stain.

But is it needful that you should, despairing, so pray? Is there no hope, no means left by which to keep so dear a treasure—to save it—to cut the plague-spot out—to make—O blessed power!—a new heart? Yes, but not in the way, O fond mother! blinded by doating folly, you set about it, trusting to your fondness.

Love—a mother's love—is a holy thing. What, if called on, thinks it that it would not do for its beloved one? Die for it? O yes, a thousand deaths, if required to make the sacrifice! Walk with me, gentle reader, in imagination, into doating Lady Fitzherbert's happy nursery. See that beautiful young mother sitting singing there sweet lullabies, with that sleeping cherub in her lap. Is it not a lovely picture? Where can you shew me one more touch-

ing? Hark! heard you ever music paint the fond mother's heart more eloquently?—

Lullaby baby, the sun's in the west,
Lullaby baby, the steed's in the stall;
If father, in gay, gallant uniform dress'd,
Can't be a king, bless his heart! baby-boy shall;
Baby-boy shall, yes, baby-boy shall,
Can't be a king, bless his heart! baby-boy shall.

Lullaby baby, by grandmother's side,
Lullaby baby, now hush thee to rest;
No ills there can reach thee, no sorrows betide,
No evils the treasur'd of Heaven molest;
The treasur'd of Heaven no evils molest,
No evils the treasur'd of Heaven molest.

Lullaby baby, may angels attend thee,
Lullaby baby, the joy of his mother;
From life's every hazard and anguish defend thee,
For, search the wide world round, there's not such another;
Another, another?—no, not such another,
For, search the wide world round, there's not such another.

No, no—there is not, nor ought there to be such another in that young mother's heart. Who would rob it of one moment of its happiness? Who could find it in their souls to mar, if they could help it, by an anxious thought, one heart-throb dedicated to so pure a shrine. But the warning *must* be

given; and blessings attend those who take it in due season.

It is surprising, with the most palpable maladies to which poor human flesh is heir, how every prescription is often had recourse to but the right one; how, in despair, fond friends will run from this to that, and that to this—from Dr. A. to Dr. B.; and Dr. C. to Dr. D., all the cleverest of their craft, wondering that they cannot find, if not a cure for the loved one, at all events the next approach to it, the hope of one. As with her bodily, so also with poor human nature's moral ailments.

Anxious friends are sorely puzzled and put to their wits' ends; and, casting about them in despair, fly, in their extremity, to every remedy but the only one. The difference in the ultimate consequences the two is very great. The one may be but the passage to death temporal; fatal, irretrievably fatal the error that ends in death eternal. Were this the fear that gave zeal to their endeavours, happy for them; but on they go—from hope to hope, and effort to effort—led by every favouring feather in the wind—catching at every straw; till, tired out—all expectation at an end, a voice,—disregarded when the lap was full of nostrums, is heard to say again—"Try my receipt!"

'Tis a kind and considerate appeal. But what avails trying any more? Has not everything been

tried? Pooh! If all that wealth, and affection, and solicitude could command has been tried, and tried in vain—what hope is there? Some things are impossible—past human art. No, no—there is no hope—Heaven's will be done! Ah! say you—mean you so—God's will be done? Hark! at that sweet Voice again, pleading to be heard. Hark!—"Try my Receipt," it says, "Try my Receipt. While there is life, there is hope. Try, try!—and *let* His will be done!"

A miracle, a miracle! Blessings, richest blessings attend thee, O sweet Voice! that recalls the dead in spirit from their sleep of sin and bondage. Thou hoveredst, like a guardian angel—healing in thy wings, and glad-tidings all around thee—over the poor lost-one. But no—we could not see thee—we would not hear thee. Thou spakest language full of truth and knowledge; but we could not understand. We could not see, and feel, and touch, and test thee. Thou wert beyond the scope of our understanding. We could not believe in the power we could not see—there was no music in the Voice we would not hear—no faith in aught but the omnipotence of self. O blessed Voice! would we had listened to thee sooner. How much ignorance—how much blindness—how much deafness—how much suffering—how many sinful murmurings had been spared us!

A miracle—a miracle!—"My Receipt" *has not failed.* See, the poor supposed lost-one sleeping soundly—safely. The fever has left him. He no longer burns with maddening fires, strikes his breast, and tears his hair, and raves of further tortures still in store for him. How sweet—how calm his slumbers! He sees bright visions in his dreams. Hark!—In the intervals of his breathing, he mutters words of joy, and praise, and prayer. His bosom heaves—he awakes to a new life—he gazes smilingly around him—congratulations greet him on all sides. "Yes, yes—I am saved—I am happy—O how happy!" he cries, with his hands thankfully clasped, and looking up to Heaven,—"O how happy!"

A miracle—a miracle!—We thought—poor, blind, deaf, helpless creatures that we are!—we had done all that could be done;—a miracle—a miracle—he lives!

"He lives!" echoes the voice.

"God's will be done!" they cry.

"His will IS done," approves the voice—"HE LIVES!"

* * * *

"God's will be done!" 'Tis an awful, but an ordinary ejaculation that meets the ear at every turn. What means it from the lips of nineteen out of twenty that most use it? Does it signify

that the spirit bows in submission to the will of Him, or seeks to rid itself of a responsibility it cannot escape from, argue how it will? Poor fond, heart-broken mother! "God's will be done!" you say, as if in the spirit of resignation to the decree that now, peradventure, wrings your bosom with shame and sorrow for the misdoings of your child.

Find you any solace from those words? Think—what do they import? Think—was it His will, who is all pity, and mercy, and long-suffering, that your child should perish; that one He created so fair of form, so graceful, and so gifted, all that mortal heart could well wish for—should be a liar, a hypocrite, a scoffer, a blasphemer, a profligate, a Sabbath-breaker, a thief, a forger, or a murderer? And, yet, listening, with soul aghast, to the sentence that condemns him to the galleys, or to the funeral knell that ushers him to the scaffold, you say, "God's will be done!" No, no! With that dreadful sentence He had nought to do, but in awarding the just penalty for the just and righteous law defied. He said not, "You shall sin." No, no! He said, "Dark and deep soever as may be the stain—if you will, you may be cleansed. I have given you that will make you clean." Had His will been done—your boy, your beloved one, would now have been

happy at your side—the pride and joy of your heart—the support and solace of your old age. He is what and where he is alone, because any will was done, in fact, *but* His.

How was it?—'tis a question for many full of deepest interest,—how was it that a mother, so good, so sensible, seemingly, so loving, so anxious and painstaking as Lady Fitzherbert, could not, or would not, see the hereditary plague-spot in her darling's heart? She was not deficient in observation and discernment. On the contrary; and while her husband was living—the time she might have best used to advantage, when the disposition might have been moulded into shape, or if not quite so, at all events have received its bias and that *in* comely form,—one would have thought she was never without a warning before her eyes. How was it that, lying in her lap, and singing to him sweetest lullabies, with his father's every feature, his very effigy in miniature ever in her thoughts, and knowing—for she loved him too well not to know them—all the dangerous failings of *his* nature—she deemed the son perfection? Did she, in her fondness, forget that he was mortal; that he was but born of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; not only, the inheritor of his father's beauties, but of his frailties as well as features. No, she did not forget—she knew it all.

But, seeing it, she did not see; and, though hearing it repeated day by day and hour by hour in language impossible to misconceive, she could not, would not understand. And up he grew. "That boy will be a trouble to you, I fear, some day," used even his father, with all his blindness to his own defects, often to predict; and kind, patient, easy Dr. Vaughan would, taking courage, sometimes think it his duty to prognosticate as much. "But, God's will be done!" would Lady Fitzherbert say, and, smothering the boy with kisses, think the prayer was more than all sufficient. Whether His will *was* done in Cecil's case, the concluding scenes of this our little domestic drama will determine.

But we may ask the question without anticipation, because it is a question we can answer at once with pleasure. Did Cecil Fitzherbert, when he pressed his lips to the cold cheek, and received the parting blessing of that fond, devoted mother, who, whatever her faults of omission and commission—and, we may be sure, those of the former far outweighed the latter—had ever been to him a mother kind and true,—feel as indifferent as he seemed to the anxious thoughts that wrung her breast?

Selfish and insensible to the best feelings of our nature as undoubtedly was the heart of Cecil Fitzherbert, it would have been scarcely possible it could have noted those affectionate looks, those swimming

eyes, those quivering lips, the heartful pressure of that detaining hand, with unconcern. Was there not suffering in every look? How could it be otherwise? There was the history of the past—though forgiven and forgotten, so far—still vividly present; and the history of the future, no less full of fears, because a problem yet unsolved. And Cecil knew it suffered, and on whose account. And did he feel as well as know it? Yes. For the first time in his life, he was conscious of something like a load at his heart that he fain would have dispensed with. 'Twas a load not easily shaken off. He tried his best; but there it still hung, a dull, dead, heavy weight that bored him dreadfully. He wouldn't give way to it. "'Twas spooney—stupid—humbug—cursed humbug! Thought be hanged!" So, off went memory back to days gone by; and something like a panorama of a thousand saddening objects he would have shut, if he could, for ever from his thoughts, floated before his eyes. Was it a tear—could it have been a tear that dimmed them—that made him feel one moment almost choking—and the next, an almost irresistible impulse to turn back—press his fevered lips once more to that cold cheek—and whisper yet a forgotten word of filial love and consolation? If so —"ah—by George!—here he was, then,"—it must be dried away, and dried, too, quickly; for "here he was, by Jove!"—at Nugent Harvey's door.

Cecil Fitzherbert talked but little, as we have seen, while Nugent Harvey did his best, as well as Charlie Ferrers, to chase the cloud from his brow. Champagne will do something to lighten a heavy heart, but its charms are transitory; and we need no better evidence to assure us, that, of whatever material or calibre it might partake—and it is due to him to acknowledge it—Cecil Fitzherbert most indisputably possessed that organ, a human heart; for, struggle against it as he would, he had reached near Bagshot before he could succeed, spite of Bella Gordon, and the roll of bank notes, in driving the image of his mother from his thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PORTRAIT.

To attempt to analyze the precise tone and current of Lady Fitzherbert's thoughts when the carriage whirled Cecil from her door, though to separate them, in all probability, at the most for but a few months, would be no easy task. Sinking into her chair, and convulsively pressing her hands together, she sat fixedly gazing, as if spell-bound, at the full-length portrait of her husband, in his Court robes, which hung opposite her; till, unable any longer to stem the torrent that would no longer be controlled, she found relief for her overcharged heart in a copious flood of tears.

Strange things those tears! How valuable, how considerate a provision, thus to supply, at need, a ready reservoir wherewith to extinguish the burning heart's consuming fire, more efficacious to quench

its devouring flames than all the vaunted resources of philosophic art. How many a breaking heart has owed its timely respite from the last convulsion to nothing else?

For more than half an hour Lady Fitzherbert thus continued sitting like a statue, save that she wept, and gazing intently on her husband's portrait. The history of an age seemed to pass in review before her mind. It took in every thought and action of her life, as it seemed to her, since the hour she first saw Lord Fitzherbert, to the moment she was left, with nothing but the sweet *souvenirs* of memory to comfort her, a widow; and now, in her loneliness, it almost appeared to her, also childless and forlorn. She thought of their first meeting—his eager, unfeigned admiration of her beauty — his pressing, polished suit—his despairing fears lest she should not think him worthy of her love—his joy at her acceptance of him—their union—his goodness to her family —his unbounded generosity to herself—his unceasing solicitude for her health and comfort—his pride in her —his praises—his little foolish jealousies—his sweet forgivenesses—his deference always to her judgment —his perfect faith in her virtue—his delight no less in her moral worth than charms of person;—the anxious period of her *accouchement*—his watchful thought for her—his tender, unremitting care—the birth of their boy—her beautiful, dark-eyed, dark-haired boy, his

father's counterpart, the very image of him; and then her eyes, dim with tears, and fixed on vacancy for a moment as she mused, again sought the picture, and it seemed to smile on her as she gazed. "Oh, how like him! The same, high, calm, commanding look—the same deep, black eyes, fringed with those long silken lashes—the same sweet, but haughty expression of the mouth—the same grace of form and feature—the same noble bearing, stamped on all his race." And then, revelling in the vivid tableau memory was calling up,—she saw her boy, her beautiful, her beloved, her first, and last, her only one, lying in her lap; and, O how heavenly! she heard her own young mother's voice singing glad hymns, and infant songs, and those loving lullabies to him. And there was his cherub face looking up into hers, and laughing for very joy, and health, and innocence, and helplessness; till, soothed, and sunk to rest, she was kneeling by his side, and pouring out the full homage of a mother's glad, grateful heart to Him, who, she knew, could hear her, and alone give her, and she was sure, *would* give her the full measure of the blessings that she asked.

She had ceased to sing sweet lullabies. And now she traced the steps, one by one, from babyhood to boyhood, noting every grafted reminiscence by the way; and from boyhood up to youth; and from youth to manhood. Not a bud, not a blossom, not a

flower was lost to her. Fresh, as though it had been but of yesterday, was every object in the picture; the conception quite as clear, the grouping just as familiar, the colouring no less vivid, and the effect to the full as striking. As a whole, could anything be more beautiful; was it not the most charming tableau imagination could conceive; where was there a fault?

Again her tearful gaze encountered the deep, searching scrutiny, as it now seemed to her, of the portrait. But its approving smile had disappeared; and, in its place, there was a sad and sorrowing look that made her heart sink within her. And then dark thoughts came whelming. Then resounded in her ears those oft-repeated, and never to be forgotten words—that last injunction—"Keep a tight hand over the boy, or he will break your heart some day." A cold chill ran through her—her blood curdled in her veins—a straw would have knocked her to the earth. Had she not done her duty—had she wilfully, wickedly sacrificed the welfare of her child to the blind fondness of the mother? What a thought—what a tumultuous rush of overwhelming reflections it brought with it!—and, with her head sunk on her bosom, for some moments Lady Fitzherbert remained so pale, so motionless, you would have scarcely thought she had any life left in her.

At length, as if by a powerful effort, again her

burning eyes sought her husband's. The stern ex
pression had given way; but again, in its place, ther
was a look of deep, yet fond melancholy, whicl
although it sent no cold thrill through her hear
was scarcely less painful to her to encounter. Sh
had hoped to do her best—she had tried—and, (
how often—how devoutly—how sincerely praye
—prayed to have the power granted her? She w
a weak woman—she knew she was—she felt—ye
she felt she was—oh, at that moment, how muc
weaker than she had ever felt before! Th
task was beyond her strength. Why did sh
rely on her strength? She had relied, no doul
too much. She had been far too self-confident-
not meek enough—she should have cast her burth
more on Him who alone had power to give h
strength to bear it. Would he, her husband, h
been spared her! O how irreparably that loss!—a
the portrait seemed to respond to the sorrowing wis
and anew to smile upon her.

"God's will be done!" Poor lorn one!—the
spoke the submissive spirit, piously, wisely. Y
His will *was* therein done, that thy husband w
taken from thee. That, thy great loss, will nev
be laid to thy door. Therein His will *was* done. A
faster chased each other the soothing tears down La
Fitzherbert's cheeks.

Yes, she had greatly erred! How should s

best atone? Was her sin irremediable! God forbid! She had been too indulgent—love had blinded her. How often had Vaughan looked it, though his heart was too soft and kind to boldly tell her so? How she wished he had oftener spoke out. Every one must have seen how blind—how weak she was! She saw it now herself. Oh, how much she had to be thankful for! And she *was* thankful—very—very thankful! To repine was sinful. His will—yes—His will *alone* be done!

Poor, fond heart! Would that His will *had*, indeed, been done. Then, you need not have been sitting sorrowing there in spirit for the days for ever gone, the time misused, the talents misapplied, and the precious opportunities for ever lost; calling pitifully on the past, as one longing, but in vain, to find in the record consolation and encouragement. Then, you need not have shrunk from the gaze of those dark, piercing eyes, that never seemed to you, till now, to look on you otherwise than with pleasure and approval; then, need you not have taken yourself so despondingly to task; nor, hoping for the best, trembled when there seemed most reason for confidence and good hopes.

Had His will, indeed, been done—then had your past life been well laid out, and your future full of fruits. But, sitting with your baby-boy in your lap, and singing to him hymns and loving lullabies, you

were happy if he only smiled on you, free from present pain and bodily complaint. Ventured a kindly voice to whisper caution—to bid you beware—in time to tend, and turn, and train the pliant sapling, while yet it might be bent,—you saw no fault—no need to win or warp it from its native crookedness; or, if not altogether blind,—"God's will be done!" you said, and deemed your own responsibility as nothing.

While yet a baby on your lap—"His will be done," so often on your lips, was no idle prayer—if prayer, in truth, thus spoken, it might be called,—no shifting the burthen of neglected duty from yourself; but, in after years, the same awful salvo for self-saving for ever near at hand was no prayer to Him at all—no acknowledgment even of incapacity or submission; but a vexatious tempting of His spirit to answer: Had my will *been* done, it had been well. My commandments are *to be done*. Happy are they who *do* them.

Poor Lady Fitzherbert!—like thousands of others, well meaning, and hoping, and believing they do their best; thinking no ill, seeing none, or, if seeing, deluding yourself, that one so fair, so favoured could have no stain, that creation so perfect could know no blemish, that He would take care of his own who made him,—you would not see, you would not hear; but, shutting eyes and ears, "God's will be done," you said, and deemed you had accom-

plished every needful purpose. You left it all to God.

Why, when on a sick bed, sent you for physicians to attend your loved one? Why said you not to them—go—I want not your advice—God will take care of his own—His will be done? Why would you have searched the wide world over, have expended your last shilling, if necessary, to restore him safe and sound to your embrace? The body, the beautiful image of clay, that you could see, and feel, and be beloved by, and be possessor of, was more precious to you, O how much more precious! than the soul, that you could not see, nor feel, nor have at your command. Nevertheless, no less than the body was it given into your keeping, to shape, and tend, and cultivate, to the glory of its Maker.

And God's will was *not done*—if, though doing all else, you neglected 'that one thing needful;' wanting which, poor, blind, deluded one!—your work was literally valueless, and your unceasing prayers in vain.

For more than another hour continued Lady Fitzherbert to revolve the teeming history of the past, as if that, alone, would effect aught but to sharpen the already too poignant sting of self-reproach. But, still, she could not draw her thoughts from a theme, which, however fraught with little consolation to herself, was a sort of righteous penance she

considered called for at her hands; when, again contemplating the portrait with suffused eyes, it seemed to her to return her sorrowing gaze with a kinder, sweeter smile. She rose from her seat—approached it closer—stood, as if rooted to the spot for some moments,—then clasped her hands together across her bosom—and, her lips moving, as if in prayer—faster and faster trickled the big tears down her cheeks. The movement of the lips ceased.

"I am happier now," she said. "I am sure *He has* heard me;" and, ringing the bell, Lady Fitzherbert ordered the carriage in half an hour; and desired that Miss Gordon might be sent to her immediately.

In a few minutes, Bella Gordon entered the boudoir, where Lady Fitzherbert, to divert her melancholy, was amusing herself with a pair of flower-scissors, snipping off the withered buds and leaves from some choice rose-trees.

"Bless me—love!" she cried, as Bella stood before her—"how pale you look!"

Bella saw, by Lady Fitzherbert's swollen eyes and pallid look, spite of her effort to seem cheerful, that she had herself been weeping; and, rightly divining the cause, only replied, "that she was suffering from a bad head-ache, but should be better by and bye."

"'Tis very close, love. Norton must give these

roses more water. Everything seems to hang its head to-day. I think, dear, an airing before dinner would do us both good. Put on your bonnet—we will go round to Henderson's, and get some fresh ones."

Gladly, might she have consulted her own wishes, would Bella have excused herself from a task which, of all others, was peculiarly distasteful to her that day; feeling anything but in a humour to be talkative and entertaining just then, especially on a theme which she well knew would engross the entire conversation during the drive. But there was no help for it; and, seeing that it would seem unkind in the extreme to have any considerations for self at such a moment, said she would be ready directly; and, regaining her room—"poor Lady Fitzherbert!" exclaimed Bella mentally—"she thinks her's is the only heart that aches to-day. Heigho!—what bonnet is it to be? What matters it? And, taking her straw, trimmed with a plain white ribbon, out of its box—"No, that wont do," sighed she —"it wants smiles to set that off—and, heigho! I've no smiles for any thing to-day. It must be the the white crape, then. If I tear out those flowers, it will do very well. What a face! There—that is better. I wonder what sort of bonnet Annie Lawton wears? O Annie, happy Annie! There, that will do,—" and, a servant entering, to say that

Lady Fitzherbert was waiting—down went Bella, trying her best to look gay and smiling with an aching heart.

At the step-side, as the footman stood with the carriage door open in his hand, a youth of about eighteen was loitering, with a superb bouquet of rare flowers in a little basket for sale, evidently obtained from some servant in the neighbourhood, who had probably figured that morning at some marriage-feast, and given it to the poor lad to make the best harvest of it that he could. Lady Fitzherbert stopped half-a-moment—not to notice the bouquet, but the lad; in whose face—which would have been exceedingly handsome had it been happy—there was an expression of deep thought and settled sorrow that seemed to strike her forcibly.

"Bless me!" she exclaimed half aloud, "how singularly like his eyes and mouth. Poor lad!" and, feeling for her purse—"my dear, can you lend me a shilling for a moment?"

Bella had been struck no less than Lady Fitzherbert with the resemblance; and, dropping a half-crown in the lad's hand, and taking the bouquet in exchange, off rolled the carriage in the direction of Hyde Park, leaving the poor fellow utterly at a loss to conceive what merit of his could have entitled him to so rich a windfall.

"There now," said Mr. Richards, yawning lustily,

as he followed the horses with his eyes down the street; "you see, young un, what it is to have good looks. Go home, and wash that pretty face of yours; and, who knows, it may be the making of you some day;" saying which, Mr. Richards leisurely re-ascended the steps, gave another look up and down, slammed the door, and, retiring to his *solium*, indemnified himself for his complacency with another lusty yawn.

CHAPTER VII.

"RUFUS."

AND who was Bella Gordon? And how came she with hopes and aspirations, by birthright, to the full as justifiable, and warm, and sanguine as those of other young ladies of her rank and station, to be thrown, an almost dependant orphan, before the age of thirteen, into the maternal arms—and a sweet asylum, too—and tender care and guardianship of Lady Fitzherbert?

Her sad story may be briefly told. Bella's mother was the only daughter of a poor clergyman in the north of England, holding a rectory of some four hundred pounds a year. Her mother, dying in her second childbirth, left her, when but two years old, to the care of a maiden aunt, by whom, under the roof of her father, she had been brought up to the age of eighteen, in all the domestic virtues which had

so endeared her lost parent to every heart; when appearing for the first time at Goodwood races, her beauty fairly took by storm the heart of a Captain Noel Gordon, then staying on a visit with some near relations in the neighbourhood; and who, if not the handsomest and gallantest fellow—if the gossips may be depended on—that ever wore epaulettes, at all events was undoubtedly so in Amy Rainsford's eyes, and that is quite sufficient for our purpose.

Captain Noel Gordon was then but just come from India, on leave of absence from his regiment; and, being determined not to return without a little wife, if he could find one worthy of his extraordinary merits, went to the county ball to have a look about him. For our own parts, we are not sure it is quite the market we should go to, to choose a wife, a race-course. But it is evident the Captain thought otherwise; and, what is more, found one exactly to his liking.

Amy Rainsford was made on purpose for him. A matter of but some £500, coming to her, in right of her mother, was her only dower; but what more did Noel Gordon want than such a hand and heart as Amy Rainsford had to give away? At all events, if Noel Gordon was satisfied, and they had decided together to live like a prince and princess on his pay, what was it to any one how they did it, gentle reader, but themselves? So, Noel Gordon and Amy

Rainsford, all in all to each other, and to the great evident dissatisfaction of several most eligible full blown young ladies round about, became man and wife.

Time rolled on; and, in due season, a miniature edition, beautiful as beautiful could be, of mamma, her very counterpart, but, if possible, more lovely, made her appearance; but, instead of bringing all happiness, and joy, and harmony, as she ought to have done, everything seemed to go cross, and crooked, and contrary ever since she showed her little face. Aunt Patty insisted it would be her death to take her out to Madras. Amy Gordon insisted she would never go without her; and the Captain insisted that he was determined to go alone. How was it all to end? Aunt Patty would not move a peg; Amy wept; and the Captain stormed. The day was fast coming to say farewell. Still, Aunt Patty was immoveable; Amy's tears flowed on; and the poor father seemed very inclined to blubber, too, in concert. If Aunt Patty would go, the difficulty would be at an end. She might have a red coat, if she liked, as sure as a gun, before she had landed ten days. Aunt Patty began to melt—Aunt Patty would go—and baby-girl, and all of them together.

Time went on; and baby grew a greater beauty every day. At length, Aunt Patty got her red-coat sure enough, and poor little Bella lost her pretty nurse.

Bella fell sick. Bella must go to dear old England, and see dear grandpapa, and breathe her native air, or she would die. Again flowed the tears down Amy-mother's cheek. Amy must go with Bella. How could Bella part with Amy, or Amy with her Bella?

Mother and child sought their native hills. But grandpapa was dead—died while they were on their voyage, and they clung to each other, in their sorrow, all the closer. Time went on—on. Home came the Captain—beg his pardon—now the Major; and O, how precious were the loving smiles that made him welcome! How short-lived life's best joys. Duty must be obeyed. But never again should Bella return to that horrid climate. She would be a great, strong, hearty girl when he returned again; and then he would never leave them—never, never, never more! On—on went the years—and, still, every day more beautiful grew Bella.

It was a glorious July afternoon, glorious as unsullied skies, and all the varied bounteous offerings of the incense breathing south could make it. There were grand doings at Lady Fitzherbert's pretty Italian villa, near Richmond, on the banks of Father Thames. And Amy and her Bella, too, were there, waiting in impatient joy for the moment that should restore the husband and father to their arms. It was the gala-feast to welcome him. He is come at last. Who shall attempt to depict the joy of that

trio of exulting hearts? If that was not true happiness, there is no such thing on earth. And now the heart is scarcely large enough to give expression to one-half it feels. It bounds from thought to thought—and ecstacy to ecstacy—there is no restraining it within the range of reason—it is delirious with delight—it treads on air—had it wings and arms large enough, it would soar away from north to south, and east to west, shouting its joy, and embracing in its transport every object in its way.

Lady Fitzherbert looks benignly on, no less happy, for she is ministering to the joy of those she loves. Sir Gilbert Gordon was the oldest of her father's friends, distantly related to him by marriage; and Roland Rainsford was a college chum; and his brother a learned leader on the Western Circuit. There is no end to the devices to make happiness still happier. Every art is put in requisition to prolong the reign of blissful pleasure.

Ah! Rufus, my fine old fellow! are you come, too, to bid your old master welcome? And what says Rufus? Rufus has no words to express his honest joy; but he can look it—and does look it, and mean it, while he licks the hands that caress him, and wags his noble tail, and seems quite at a loss how to give utterance to his satisfaction. But who or what is Rufus, that he should take his place that day with such assurance among that high-born group?

Among the many valuable presents the Major had, at one time or another, brought with him from India for his wife and child, was a magnificent dog, named Rufus, partly of the Newfoundland, and partly of the stag-hound breed, formerly the property of a brother officer, who purchased him in Switzerland, and gave him to the Major on his death-bed. Rufus, though terrible as an antagonist, was invaluable as a friend; and Mrs. Gordon used often to say, "she would rather have Rufus to escort her, for protection, in her walks during her husband's absence, than any man."

Rufus deserved the praises lavished on him. He was a great favourite too, of Lady Fitzherbert's, who always insisted on his accompanying his mistress and Bella, when they came to visit her at the Villa. This will account for Mr. Rufus making himself so much at home on Lady Fitzherbert's lawn, and taking so prominent a part in the festivities of the day. With the Major he was on the fondest terms that true and trusty friend could be; and, when at home, was scarcely ever absent from his side; and although he had been so long away, directly he caught sight of his master, all the dog's former attachment for him seemed in a moment to revive. Nor was he less prized for his sagacity and courage by Mrs. Gordon and Bella, whose constant body-guard was always Rufus, as we have said, in their daily rides or walks.

It seemed, indeed, sometimes almost doubtful which he loved best, the father, the mother, or the child. For no sufficient reason, he would attach himself for a whole day exclusively to one, or to the other, leaving every one else most pointedly deserted. But, beyond the prescribed circle of his due allegiance, he would seldom stray at all, unless it might be occasionally to go and sit condescendingly down by Lady Fitzherbert's side, while she was reading or knitting, and rub his nose against her gown; till, having got his share of her caresses, he would march off; or, if too lazy, extend himself at her feet full length, and, laying his grizzly beard calmly on his fore-paws, fall off into a tranquil doze; but, although apparently fast asleep, having, odd enough, an eye and ear ever open, against any unseemly intrusion on their peace or privacy.

These little capricious preferences—for the Major, though with as brave and generous a heart as ever beat under scarlet coat, was terribly jealous—piqued him more than he ever chose to tell. Amy or Bella might be as capricious as they liked, and pretend all sorts of ridiculous indifference; he could bear that; but Rufus' neglect cut him deeply. Nothing pleased him more than to exult over them by winning away the dog to his side, when they had the mind to monopolise him to themselves. This might be unamiable; but truth is the first consideration, and

we must view the Major to-day, not in his uniform, tricked out for parade, but in his plain undress; and, for our own parts, we are not at all sure but that the simple undress became him much the best. He would delight, in his shooting-jacket and foraging cap, and with a huge blackthorn in his fist, to coax Rufus with him one way, while Amy or Bella did their best to coax him just the other. It was a trial of skill; and, if ever Rufus made an unfortunate choice, there was no earthly use in thinking of asking for a new bonnet that day; and Master Rufus might look in vain for his nice mess of bread and milk, well-sugared, unless he got it, on the sly, from Lady Fitzherbert or Bella, when his master was not looking. Not but that the Major would have been exceedingly wrath if Rufus had not shewn decided marks of high consideration for his wife and child, and even threatened to be furious one day, when, all that Lady Fitzherbert could do, he would not be upon good terms with her. But he must love no one as well as himself. This granted, no one rejoiced more than the Major to see him the universal theme of praise and admiration.

A joyous group of merry hearts stood watching the setting sun illuminating the western heavens with his parting glories, and responding with one eye and heart to the evident delight—for those who had eye and heart to see it—of old Father Thames, in whose

broad bosom was burning the pride he felt, no doubt, and with good reason, at being the chosen minister that happy day thus to do homage to his master's greatness; when, somehow, a little playful dispute arose between the Major and Mrs. Gordon about Rufus; the Major betting her a new bonnet, and Amy betting him a new hat, that the dog would do exactly as he, or she should bid him. Heavy ran the odds. Evidently Amy Gordon was the favourite.

"Now we 'll see, then," cried the Major; and, loosening from the velvet bank a little pleasure skiff, kept moored there for the amusement of her visitors, Lady Fitzherbert secured Rufus by the collar with her handkerchief; when, pushing off, the skiff soon reached the middle of the river. "Let him go!" called the Major, "let him go;"—and, once more free, up and down the bank tore Rufus, barking and bounding at every turn, scarcely able to contain himself.

"Rufus, Rufus!" called his master, accompanying the call with a shrill whistle that made Rufus prick his ears again.

"Here, boy—here—here!—Rufus, Rufus!" cried Amy Gordon, appealingly; "would you leave me? cruel, faithless Rufus!"

Higher and higher went the odds,—still, Amy Gordon was the favourite. The suspense was fearful—when—hark!—that well known whistle again.

"Stay, sir—stay!—do you hear? cried Amy, stamping her foot, and with an air not unworthy of Queen Bess. "I entreat—I command you—stay!"

Poor Rufus! Never was courtier put to it more anxiously how to serve two masters. Gazing beseechingly, first on one, then on the other—for a moment even so experienced a diplomatist as Sir Rufus knew not how—with credit to himself—the point was to be decided; and seeing no other way, we suppose, to vent his vexation, and, perhaps, give expression to his sorrow, leisurely squatted on his haunches, and setting up a pitiful howl, a loud burst of laughter joined in chorus from every one around.

"There, now," cried Amy Gordon, "havn't I won my bonnet?"

"Yes, yes," said Lady Fitzherbert, clapping her hands; "yes, yes!" cheered one and all.

"Wait a moment!" shouted the Major, at the top of his lungs; "wait till you get it;" and, seeing that the dog recognised his voice again, and repeating the whistle still shriller than before, he made a feint as if he were falling overboard; when, spite of calls, or threats, or coaxings, or entreaties, up started Rufus, and, plunging in the water; "halloo—halloo!" vociferated the Major—"where's my new hat, eh? Good dog—good dog—here—here, halloo—halloo—seize it—seize it!" and throwing

his cap up in the air—off it skimmed with the wi into the stream.

"Seize it!" cried the Major;—"good dog——g dog!"—and, making a plunge at it at the sa time with the scull, down he slipped, and, boat yielding to his weight, over he tumbled he long into the water. And now it seemed onl race between dog and master, which should get dry land first. A scream from Amy Gord echoed by Lady Fitzherbert, and seconded by Be soon brought the servants to the rescue, with ro and restoratives in abundance.

"He cannot swim far—I know he cannot," cr Amy, in an agony of terror. "See, already strokes grow more faint—he will sink—he sink—O my God!" and, clasping her hands gether, while Bella, pale and speechless with dre stood trembling at her side—she ran backwa and forwards along the bank like one frenzi Already more than one brave heart had thro off coat and waistcoat, and were waiting the rig moment to plunge in, should it be necessary. E the Major's strength seemed still sufficient, a could he but get a little nearer, there were rea hands enough to lug him safe ashore.

Enticed away by the cap, Rufus had got behin but, still with it in his mouth, now came faster c

determined to catch his master up, if he could; when, his prize escaping from his gripe, he was obliged to retrace his steps some distance to recover it; but, striking out again, seemed resolved to make up for lost time, and was fast gaining on the Major, whose strength was evidently giving way—when, "a rope—a rope!" he cried faintly,—and his head disappeared the next moment beneath the current.

With a harrowing shriek, and before any one had the power to prevent her, Amy Gordon rushed down the bank, and, throwing herself into the river, in the direction where her husband had just sunk, was carried away in an instant by the tide.

As if this were not enough—while terror and dismay were on every face, amidst a scene of horror and consternation impossible to depict—came a piercing cry, so agonizing, so heart-rending, as to send the life-blood from every cheek, and a cold thrill through every heart present.

Turning towards the spot from whence it proceeded—just a few yards from which was visible a woman's white, delicate hand above the waters—and a child bending agonizedly forward as if to catch at it as it passed,—"help! O my God!" cried Lady Fitzherbert, springing forward—"save her—save her!"—but too late to arrest the poor girl's frantic purpose. Seeing the struggling hand fast leaving her, as if bidding her a last farewell,

her brain reeled—her knees sank under her——a plunging after it—all the thought that, seeming was left her, poor child! was how she could b reach that loved mother's last embrace.

To attempt to describe the agonizing scene t now ensued on Lady Fitzherbert's lawn would impossible!

But where was Rufus? Why was Rufus in time? Rufus had struggled hard to do best. But for that fatal cap, all this misery store for him had been spared him. Tearing alo the bank, he galloped from place to place, sear ing, and panting, and barking furiously, but vain, for the lost forms he sought to find; some object in the water suddenly arresting attention—he ran, as if frantic, some distance do the stream—then, halting for an instant, dash in, and, eagerly pressing on, soon was seen to tu back, and to be dragging some heavy burthen w difficulty to the shore.

"It is—it is—the child—the child!" cried La Fitzherbert, running as well as her beating he and tottering knees would permit her, closely f lowed by her breathless friends and servants, the spot where Rufus, after a hard struggle, l panting over the almost inanimate form of l young mistress extended at his feet. "Merci God!" cried she, sinking on her knees, and catc

ing the dripping form of the senseless orphan to her heart—"O spare her—spare her!"

The prayer was heard. Oh, those moments of torturing suspense! At length she breathed—was carried to her bed;—and from that hour, next to her own child, no earthly object was so dear to Lady Fitzherbert's heart as the orphan Bella.

Ere nightfall, the bodies of the father and the mother were found, locked in each other's embraces, one arm of Amy's circling her husband's neck, among the flags and sedges, a short distance down the river.

And well and abundantly did Lady Fitzherbert perform a second mother's part. 'Twas a sacred trust, and most sacredly she fulfilled it. Could there be any substitute for a mother's loss—truly might Bella say, she had found that substitute in the maternal heart of Lady Fitzherbert. And—that nothing might be wanting on a daughter's part—in the south aisle of Bella's native village, Moorfield, may be seen the beautiful monument of grief and affection, with its touching epitaph, erected by her to the memory of her lost parents. They sleep beneath that tablet, side by side.

As for Rufus, it is unnecessary to add, that if, before, a favourite, and no small one, of Lady Fitzherbert's, she might well be believed, when—often asked in after days, by admiring friends, what she

would take for him,—she replied, while Bella's ey
would fill with tears as the words fell from h
lips; "not a whole hat-full of golden guineas." An
frequently, when the tale of her parents' sad fa
was the theme of their tender talk together, whi
Rufus lay stretched on the rug before them—f
he was a privileged visitor at all times at the Vil
—would Bella, quitting Lady Fitzherbert's sid
slip down beside him; and, putting her arm roun
his neck, imprint kiss after kiss upon his forehead
till a tear would trickle down her cheeks, and suc
a look from poor old Rufus meet her sorrowin
gaze as no pencil could pourtray,—that seemed t
say to her, in tones far more eloquent than all th
flowers of language could have uttered them, "ye
I know what you are thinking of. Would
indeed, it had been so! It is that sad though
which hangs heaviest at *my* heart, too!"

CHAPTER VIII.

YOUNG LOVE.

LIVING for so many years together as did Cecil and Bella, under the same happy roof, under the one same indulgent maternal eye, uncontrolled by paternal discipline of any kind—for Dr. Vaughan and Nugent Harvey's gentle rule made the hardest duties but mere pastime,—basking in the lap of luxury, with every wish gratified almost before expressed, leaving nothing to be desired but that pain would never follow pleasure, and that pleasure would never pall; eating of the same sweet bread, and imbibing, unrestrained, at the same delicious springs; accustomed to regard each other as fond brother and sister, whose mutual happiness was dependent on each other; of like features, and complexion, tastes, and disposition; both eminently handsome, rare models for the Italian painter or

the sculptor; devouring the same books; lovers o all that breathes of poesy and sentiment; revelling in the same ever-smiling *parterre*, where only flowers, and flowers of the freshest and the sweetest promised to be found, or, rather, where the weeds that grew in plenty with them were so artfully mixed in, so cunningly interwoven, the one with the other so inseparably entwined, that it was hardly possible to distinguish which was which; thrown as they were, necessarily, so much into each other's society, and knowing no joy like that of being agreeable to each other; creating a little heaven of happiness of their own, as it were, around them and asking for nothing beyond the placid enjoyment of it as they had fashioned it for themselves,—is it surprising, that, as they grew to man and womanhood, they should have felt something more than common brother and sister's affection for each other? It would have been very unnatural had it not been so.

Then, with that superfluity of time to spare with all their busy avocations, so largely granted to the rich, Cecil and Bella had to look often to each other for the difficult secret, how to rob idleness of its *ennui*. And herein Bella showed to manifest advantage. In one essential respect Bella Gordon differed materially from Cecil Fitzherbert. Whereas, Cecil was innately selfish and indolent

not a more unselfish heart, though with indomitable energy of purpose and resolution, ever beat in woman's bosom than in Bella Gordon's. This saved Cecil considerable trouble; and, perhaps—for idleness is a monstrous admirer of industry—served as much almost as her beauty and devotion to himself, to endear him to his darling—as he always called her—foster-sister.

But, though passing much of their time together, when Cecil was at home; pursuing the same studies, if such they might be called, so as to become proficients, under able masters, in all the prevailing modern languages and accomplishments, and prodigies of learning—no doubt—in every other branch of fashionable knowledge,—Lady Fitzherbert took good care that Bella should also know something of those other, what she called, plain, useful parts of female education, which she considered were indispensable to complete the perfect finish of an English gentlewoman. Lady Fitzherbert assuredly was right—"Moral philosophy, elocution, polite correspondence, practical utility, elements of logic, Soyer's cookery, and the calisthenic exercises—by all means," she would often say; "and elementary therapeutics, theology, and the *deux-temps*, if their heads could bear it all; but let them know how to spell the words, at least. She had got a letter that very day from a young lady who had been

nine years to school, and two at a finishing establishment in Regent's Park, and taken seven prizes —and—you would scarcely believe it—spelt 'grammar' with one *m*."

For our own part, Lady Fitzherbert's system of female education seems to supply—notwithstanding the gigantic marches young ladies are now making—really a great desideratum. Not the slightest objection had Lady Fitzherbert to their being taught euclid, logic, and polite oratory, if they liked them; but she insisted that it was no less expedient—before they talked of loving pigeon-pie—they should be made clearly to understand, there was no *d* in "pigeon," nor *y*, either, in the "pie;" until they could accomplish which, they ought to have nothing to eat and drink, she thought, but bread and water. And, talk of new bonnets—she had no patience!—Buy them a fool's cap and bells, the pretty dunces!

Under so sensible a system, added to a remarkable aptness for acquiring what was taught her, unwearied assiduity where the task was undertaken, and cheerfulness in making herself master of it, be it what it might, there would have been no counting the prizes if Bella Gordon had gone to one of our modern College schools. So that, when her professors, fairly exhausted, took their leave, Lady Fitzherbert had no reason to suspect that

their praises were mere flattery, or to repent, in the least, of a system, which had turned out, in the person of her *protégée*, "such a true pattern," as she expressed it, "of what an English gentlewoman ought to be."

That Bella soon learned to love Lady Fitzherbert like a mother was natural enough, and that, as far as fondness and unremitting care and affection went, no mother ever deserved to be more loved by child than Lady Fitzherbert, may be easily believed. The more so, perhaps, because, with the second mother, she found such a kind, attentive, generous brother to welcome her to their united home. Nor was Cecil less delighted at the thought, that he had found so sweet a little sister, ready-made, to share it with him. We need not dwell now on the various points of beauty, the sweet tints, and softened shades that gave to this little cabinet picture its chief attractions. They were so sweetly grouped, so harmoniously blended, in such happy keeping throughout, that they must be taken in entire at a glance, an easy matter enough for those with artist's eye and heart; and, for any others, description would be labour quite in vain.

The gradual, and, at length, close-entwinings of the brother and the sister's hearts was a process so natural, so inevitable—with beauty equal, and ideas and tastes so much alike, and sentiments,

the mutual reflex of each other, echoing eac other's every thought and wish almost before ex pressed—that but one result could be expected, an that was the last Lady Fitzherbert ever dreame of. If there was much in their true natures no strictly congenial; if Cecil's heart thought a gre deal too much, and Bella's far too little ofte times for self,—the more yielding, because mo loving and more generous nature of the girl, soo made them so seem; and they might look like tw graceful sapling trees of gentle form and natu growing up together, though of different bulk an hardihood, but partaking of the same nature an inclination, leaning the same way, showing the sam promises of blossom, and—no—that would be to much to say—not the same good fruits. By an bye we shall judge of them, and then may pass ou verdict, as we find them.

"How perfectly of one mind and heart are m children, thank Heaven!" would Lady Fitzherbert often say to Dr. Vaughan, as they sat chatting together, and forming plans for their future happiness and welfare. "How like fond brother and sister ought to be!"

"Not *more so*, I trust," would rise to the Doctor's lips, but there remain unuttered. A pity it should have so remained. But the Doctor might not have felt quite free to express more, and been

disinclined to arouse a thought in Lady Fitzherbert's mind which he knew, of all others, would be the most displeasing to her, and for which, after all, there might be no foundation, but in his own, might be, too great anxiety. Such an idea as a thought of other love than what brother and sister might feel for each other had never entered Lady Fitzherbert's imagination. To her they were to all intents and purposes nothing more. As such they had first met, and as such she had ever regarded them, and conceived, of course, that they regarded, too, each other; and had any one—even of more weight, if possible, with her than Dr. Vaughan—but hinted such an idea as the necessity for caution, though the thought had struck her cold as marble, she would have scouted it as ridiculous; and, recovering herself, smiled the moment after on "her children," as she always called them, as a mother smiles on a beloved son and daughter, and dismissed them with an approving parent's blessing on their heads.

But, though Lady Fitzherbert was perfectly at ease, and Dr. Vaughan in two minds what to think, there were times when Nugent Harvey's scrutinizing glance could not but note, that Bella's bright eyes would kindle occasionally at Cecil's approach rather more delightedly than was the usual wont with fondest sister towards even fondest bro-

ther; and that, when he left her, she would be abstracted, and answer absently, and her colour would fade, and her voice become more pensive, till he came again to her; and, though Cecil had a heart very different from Bella's, loving nothing wholly but himself, an utter stranger to the pure devotion that burnt in hers, that there were times even with Cecil Fitzherbert, when he would gaze less strictly fraternally than beseemed a brother on that sweet face and faultless form, and, after a due survey, grant, even to him, that she was "very lovely, ten times more so than Emma Sommersley, his mother made such a fuss about, with all her fortune and old Sir Harry's acres ten times told." And then would Cecil steal up to her, and, gazing up into her face, talk about those things he thought would please her best,—her books—her birds—her flowers — her drawings — her music — her little stealthy charities—the only point on which she *would be* selfish,—of poor old Rufus, too, and the tablet in the aisle of Moorfield church;—and, when he had brought the tears into her eyes, take her willing hand, and, finding a pretext in her sorrow for pressing her, for consolation, to his heart, entwine his arm round her waist, and, like a good, kind, fond brother, kiss those tears away; nor desist till she had promised to forgive him his great impertinence and presumption.

What Cecil's real feelings were for his 'darling Bell,' as he called her, will be seen as we go on with our story. At present, we know no more of them than might have been expected from a turn of mind like his—passionate and fitful as the ruling temper urged him, towards a beautiful, accomplished, and dependant girl, placed in the peculiarly interesting position as was Bella under his mother's charge. As for her son ever regarding Bella Gordon otherwise than as a sister, and her *protégée*—such a thought, as we have said, was the very farthest from Lady Fitzherbert's mind. But if all else were blind, where there should have been most need for vigilance, and "God's will be done!" with Lady Fitzherbert, as usual, left nothing to be feared,—there was one, who, though seeing nothing, was wide awake, and that one was Nugent Harvey. But Nugent Harvey had his own reasons for not troubling his head with matters that, just then, did not immediately concern him; or, rather, for seeing nothing, and, therefore, knowing nothing —till it suited his purpose to open his eyes and ears —and then, no one could see and hear clearer than Nugent Harvey.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARK-AIRING.

As Bella Gordon had rightly reasoned, it was very natural there should be one all-absorbing theme uppermost in Lady Fitzherbert's mind on the day Cecil left her for Marksbury, which would be likely to engross the conversation pretty much during their drive that afternoon. Not that Bella disliked by any means to take her accustomed place in the carriage by Lady Fitzherbert's side; and, by all the entertaining powers she was mistress of, to do her best, especially on that day, to amuse and comfort her; nor that the theme that was sure to be the chief subject of their discussions was otherwise than the one of all others she most desired to think and talk about herself; but, somehow, she never felt so little inclined for converse of any kind as then, and would have gone a thousand miles anywhere almost,

rather than have faced the whirl, and glare, and glitter of the malls; and, ten thousand, rather than have encountered the provoking scrutiny, that day, of Nugent Harvey.

She felt as if she would, if she could, escaping from the world, and all its vanities, and insincerity, and hollowness, and heartlessness, go and bury herself in solitude; and there, giving herself up to all the luxury of melancholy, take herself seriously to task, and either return with stronger will, and happier hopes, or never trust its deceitful promises more. Poor Bella! she was as yet but an infant in the world's hollow ways, to talk, even to her own heart, of turning out of its flowery paths for a moment, one would have thought; much less, of quitting them, poor, loving, hoping, trusting heart! for ever.

But, of all men, to have shrunk from the approving smiles, the courtly compliments, the graceful attentions, the very friendly manners, the open arms, and opener heart of Mr. Nugent Harvey does seem strange. What could have come over the usually happy spirit of Bella's heart, thus to ruffle it; and, at the bare thought only of encountering one so well bred, so gentlemanly, so calm, so unassuming, so sensible, so entertaining, so interesting as Nugent Harvey, to make her long, at the very idea of his approach, to rush ten thousand miles the other way? Inexplicable thing, that timid heart of a young girl!

It will run up, all openness and unreserve, to the embrace of the bold, the honest, bluff, and blustering; laugh lovingly in his face, nay, cling to his near-side arm, and think no harm of it; but, approach the courtly sycophant, the honeyed hypocrite, the satin-faced, patent-polished flatterer—though worthy of a bust by Michael Angelo, with a tongue would shame Apollo, and open heart, as open as Nugent Harvey's—oh, how different! It shrinks within itself, as if the serpent's trail were creeping over it; or, if curious enough just to risk a peep, keeps at such respectful distance, that Sir Sycophant Satin may pass by; or, if not, with grace, to be avoided, affords him, perforce in courtesy, a cold finger, or a colder nod, and deems even that a hard tax upon her honesty.

That they should be pretty sure of meeting Nugent Harvey, having a canter as usual, before dinner, round the ride, Bella made no doubt. Nugent Harvey prided himself on his horse, was a graceful rider, and enjoyed the "Row" exceedingly. Added to which, his equestrian merits, for which he was noted, drew round him a choice circle with whom it was no less his great profit than his pleasure to stand well. Why Bella Gordon should have shrunk so that day from the thought of encountering no more lustrous and loving glances than Nugent Harvey's, seeing how many far brighter and more languishing, had she desired them, were at her

command, must remain a secret buried for the present in her own breast. For, though but a poor orphan, and, beyond a little matter of some fifteen hundred pounds, the residue, after the winding-up of her parents' affairs, of all their worldly wealth, and which, by Bella's own wish, sanctioned by Lady Fitzherbert, Dr. Vaughan had profitably invested in the purchase of a small property, from old associations much endeared to her in her native village, entirely dependent on Lady Fitzherbert's bounty, Bella's beauty and accomplishments were quite enough, of themselves, to draw many ardent admirers round her; even had it not oozed out, as it had done, that, in addition to the little Moorfield investment, Houghton Palmer was keeping, by Lady Fitzherbert's desire, an eye on the old Manor House, too, and farms thereunto appertaining, and which, with sundry other probable, and highly interesting additions in Miss Bella's favour, would make that young lady's hand and heritage no bad spec some day, and her present favour well worth a little elegant extra trouble to obtain.

But, although there could be no fear of Bella Gordon not having her full fair share of eager admirers at every turn, what was there so dangerous in Nugent Harvey's smiles, that she would have gone ten thousand miles another way that afternoon,

rather than have come within reach of their keen, scrutinizing ken?

Nugent Harvey, an amateur of many things worth admiration, was, or professed to be, a great amateur of female beauty. Therein he showed his taste, and might consider it only a fit proof of it to distinguish with his *extra* approbation, what every one else admitted to be *extra* worthy of it, in this instance? Again, was it not most natural and proper? Would it not have been most ungracious and ungrateful towards Lady Fitzherbert to have been deficient in those little elegant attentions to Miss Gordon, as her ward, required of him as a gentleman, and one so indebted to the family as he was for so many kindnesses and attentions? Surely—nothing could be clearer. Had he ever outstepped propriety in any one respect? Never. On the contrary, he had always been most scrupulous, since his intimacy in Hill Street, not to look, or say, or do anything that could be construed even into the shadow of a liberty or presumption—a rock, he knew very well the danger, to an ambitious, adventuring mind, of splitting on. He had seen too many go to pieces on it, not to know its perils.

Indeed, he might say, he had been too punctilious for his own profits. And though, since he had heard—quite casually—from Houghton Palmer, of

Lady Fitzherbert's friendly dispositions in Miss Gordon's favour, he certainly might have—and he must have been very unfeeling if he had not—might have felt, and expressed himself to Cecil, pleased at her good fortune, and met her with those friendly congratulations demanded from good manners,—he would defy even his greatest enemy to say, with truth, that he had even offered more, by look, or word, than what the most disinterested friendship would approve.

So cogitated Nugent Harvey as he cantered down the "Row." What should have turned his thoughts into that particular vein is difficult to say; unless it might be something odd, or cold, or unusual in Bella's manner the last time they met, which had set him pondering, and on his best behaviour for the future. "She is proud, and so am I," said he to himself, as he rode along. "There we're not badly matched. Go on, old horse! Let's see—The old Manor House—and how many acres did Houghton Palmer say?—Let's see—five hundred, wasn't it? in a ring fence. Not a stick been cut for seven years. Snug homestead—and shooting pretty good. —Rather gloomy the old house. Nice part of the country;—ah! how do, Plympton?—pretty mare that. Let's see—thought she'd make it twenty thousand, didn't he say?—twenty—twenty! Proud little minx! All Cecil's fault. Gad! that idea of Annie Lawton

wasn't bad. Wonder how she looks to-day? precious glum, I'll bet a thousand. Shan't dine there to-morrow. Blow over after a bit. Time enough. By Jove! a fix that maid of Marksbury. Twenty thousand! Nugent Harvey, play thy game but like thyself, man—and, by Heaven!—the stakes are thine, if thou wilt have them. Go on old horse. —*Andentes fortuna juvat*—go on—go on, Sir."

Loosening the rein, off bounded the 'old horse' at a hand gallop; till, overtaking a party of friends, Harvey pulled up, and, exchanging salutations, soon was revelling, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, seemingly, in all the exciting diversities of opinion afloat as to the merits of the last new ballet.

Perhaps, whatever mere friendly thoughts Nugent Harvey might bestow on Bella Gordon's sunny prospects, that young lady's manifold merits had occupied more of his gracious consideration, of late, than Bella, with all her suspicions, had any notion of. With Cecil near to eclipse every other aspirant to her good graces, it followed very naturally that she had little thought or inclination for any smiles but his; and he, Nugent Harvey, with all his charms, might have sat staring at her for an hour with those deep searching eyes of his, and she had scarcely troubled herself to observe that they honoured her with a look. But there was one occasion, and it had struck her forcibly at the time, only a few

days before Cecil's departure, when, having sat with her chatting on a host of little nothings some time in the drawing-room alone, his manner suddenly changed, as if he forgot himself, or was confused, or as she had sometimes seen him after dinner, but then she attributed it only to the wine; and there was a peculiar look in his eyes, she never noticed till then, made her quite uncomfortable, as she knew he had been talking to Lady Fitzherbert only the evening before about her; and a tone in his voice, and an unusual animation and excitement altogether, made it quite a delightful relief to her when he rose to take his departure; but not before leaving a pressure on her hand, which, however slight, taken in conjunction with the odd looks, and voice, and manner so peculiar, was too significant, from one like Nugent Harvey, to be dismissed from her mind as a matter of no moment.

With reflections this way tending, Bella took her seat next Lady Fitzherbert for their park airing; and it would not be far from the truth to say, that, had Lady Fitzherbert quite fainted away with the heat under which she seemed melting, as she begged her to let down the window on her side, and it had been her duty to bid the coachman turn back and hasten home again, she should have rejoiced at any pretext, almost short of death itself, to have escaped from the glare and stare of 'that horrid park' that day.

For some minutes there was a mutual silence: when, the carriage turning into Park Lane, Lady Fitzherbert threw herself back, and, wondering it was so hot, commenced vehemently fanning herself while literally melting with the mere exertion. It was one of those sultry, stifling August afternoons when nothing seems to be on the stir but the burring insects, and they seem to have a most extraordinary disposition for liveliness and gaiety when nothing else can breathe. One of those days when the air is standing stock still, and, for very exhaustion, apparently incapable of another effort; when the wasps and flies in the grocer's windows have it all to themselves, and the pastry-cook girls are kept in a literal bath of perspiration ladleing out ices and ice-creams.

But all the world, or rather all such part of it as still remained in town, were gathering towards the Serpentine, the only point, short of Wimbledon, or Hounslow, where a breath of air was to be inhaled; and thither Lady Fitzherbert's coachman dozily steered his gentle course. His very curly flaxen wig was insupportable to look at, it was so stuffy; and, whatever might have been her need, Bella saw his mistress could not, just then, have found it in her heart, were it ever so, to drag Mr. Jeames down from his rumble, so downright cruel it would have been to have made that esteemed functionary one iota more damp and uncomfortable than he then was.

In a word, it was just possible to sit still, but utterly out of the question, without falling into a state of liquefaction, to move a muscle; much less wield a great green fan, which poor Lady Fitzherbert persisted in doing, under the delusion, we suppose, that the draught occasioned thereby came from Hampstead, and not from her own hand.

Even conversation, nay, the very thought of it, was overpowering, at all events to one heart then present, it felt so. But, then, that heart was weighed down with a load quite as much as it had strength, with grace, to bear; though, had it been asked, it would have preferred it should have been doubled, aye, trebled, heavy as it was, rather than have shared one grain of it with another.

Far otherwise with poor Lady Fitzherbert. She, too, had her load that day, and a very heavy one it was for her to carry. But it was not of that nature which admits of neither share nor sympathy. Her labour was such as might look for rest. To unburthen her heart would likewise help to make her feel more cool. She was fairly over-done—could contain herself no longer—must shift it on another, or break down under it altogether. So, putting up her fan. "I think, my love," said she, "nay, I feel confident, we have done wisely, in giving Cecil a run for a time in the country—'twill do wonders for his health, which has caused me some concern of

late. And the opportunity—while pursuing their studies together—of knowing more of his Cousin Clermont—that's a great thing!"

Lady Fitzherbert paused a moment for an answer; but getting none—Bella still listening as if considering how to frame one—"don't you think so, love—" asked she.

"You consider Marksbury a healthy place?" asked Bella, repressing a deep sigh.

"That I am quite sure of, love." No doubt of that—"very healthy! And Esther Lawton such a good nurse. I shan't have a moment's rest, though, till he has got his new flannels. I think Norton said they'd be done by Friday."

"He can manage to dispense with them to-day, at least," consoled Bella, loosening her bonnet-strings.

"He hasn't been so thoughtless, I hope," continued Lady Fitzherbert, "as to leave without the quinine and opodeldoc? He promised me he'd go to Savory and Moore's."

"And he did so, I am confident, if he promised," said Bella.

"I reckon a good deal, too," resumed Lady Fitzherbert, after a pause, "on the Vicar's early hours—and getting Cecil into a more regular system of study. It isn't that he wants ability. As a child, he used to astonish us all—you never saw such quickness—he was quite a prodigy. But I do think

and believe, as Nugent Harvey says—his health is by no means strong. Dear—how terribly close —isn't it?"

"Clermont Onslow will be such a nice companion for him," observed Bella.

"Won't he?—So I think, love. Clermont has such a sweet, engaging temper—and is the soul of honour and generosity, and gentleness—like his father."

"And is very clever, isn't he?" asked Bella "At last, I mean, very clever at Greek and Latin, and mathematics, and all that?"

"So Vaughan says; and will do Cecil a deal of good, I'm in hopes—as an example, I mean, love—of what may be done by a little application, and patience, and perseverance—which you see, dear—"

"When Lord Fitzherbert gets quite well and strong again," anticipated Bella, "will be the easiest thing in the world with his talents."

"Exactly my opinion, love. I assure you, that thought has had its weight with me, as also with Vaughan, in sending him to the vicarage. And Clermont is such a gentle, generous creature. No fear of jealousies."

"Jealousies?" repeated Bella, emphasizing the word a little. "Law!—how?"

"Not at all, dear — not the least. But I'll acknowledge—when Vaughan first suggested the vicarage scheme—the thought did run for a moment

in my head. Not on Annie Lawton's account so much —that's ridiculous!—Cecil, I should hope, knows himself too well for that—and what my views and wishes are on that score—to get any nonsense of that sort into his head;—but fearing, dear, lest being so much behind hand with his books—and there I know his health must feel it—Cecil—you know, dear, his impatient temper—might feel disheartened, just at first, with his cousin—being so much before him—don't you see, dear?"

Bella breathed again, and declared she knew exactly what Lady Fitzherbert meant; but, for her own part, had no fear at all, of any one long leaving Cecil behind-hand, when he felt earnestly disposed, and well enough, to do his best.

"There we perfectly agree, love. Nothing can be clearer. In that case, there would be but one result. But a little force of example will do no harm, love; and, as for Annie—dear girl!—such an idea's not worth another thought."

"And yet you do think—and think a good deal, too, about it," sighed Bella to herself. "I wonder if Miss Lawton *is* as pretty—*really* as pretty, as they make her out?"

"I doubt not a *very* pretty girl, indeed," replied Lady Fitzherbert—"for *that style*."

"What style?" asked Bella, animatedly, forgetting that she had put the same question, at one time or

another, twenty times before, and been answered *in extenso* quite as often. But it seemed that, ask it as often as she might, it was a theme on which Lady Fitzherbert was never tired of dilating.

"It must be now—let me see—more than six years since I saw Annie, love. She must have been, then, about twelve years old—a nice, fresh, happy-looking, pretty, modest, lady-like girl enough, with fair complexion—too fair to my taste — almost transparent; blue eyes—but a very beautiful blue!—pale-golden hair—more lovely and luxuriant than I think I ever saw, or have ever seen since — a colour you *very rarely* see; a slim, graceful figure, about your own height when you were that age; and features, if not decidedly regular, as you may say, certainly pleasing, with a very sweet expression, very sweet! especially when she smiled. A good set of teeth are such an ornament! Annie's were as white and even as your own. I think her nose, as well as I can remember, turned up the least bit in the world, scarcely perceptible, but this suited her mouth, which was Annie's sweetest feature, all to nothing. Tastes do differ so about eyes. Certainly Annie's had nothing but love, and kindness, and gentleness in them. They never seemed without a smile, that's true. But, I think I prefer a little more fire, and energy, and decision in the eyes. Girls, though, do

alter so between the ages of twelve and seventeen. Don't you recollect Agnes Sommersley—what a sweet creature she promised to be at thirteen?—and—poor dear!—what a fright she turned out!"

"Poor girl! yes," said Bella, picking the petals abstractedly off a choice damask rose in her bouquet, and letting them drop at her feet,—"that terrible small-pox!"

"True, love! but girls do alter greatly in five years. Yes, what a thousand pities that was! Do you know, I think they managed her very badly. I'm always so afraid of that terrible small-pox. Thank Heaven! Cecil was vaccinated twice! I believe they do take it sometimes even after a second vaccination. There's none of it at Marksbury, I should think, or the Vicar would have told us. I've always such a dread, too, of damp beds at those old country parsonages—and of draughts—and rheumatisms. That was how Cecil got that dreadful cold at Castlemore, when he went rabbit-shooting with Nugent Harvey—I shall never forgive Crofts for that."

A thunder-cloud, which had been hanging over head for some while, now emptied itself most acceptably upon the grateful earth; and, having passed over, and the sun bursting out with redoubled glory, while everything seemed to cock its head and crow again with renovated life and gladness.

"How delicious!" exclaimed Bella, letting down the glass again; "I really felt as if I must have fainted."

"A lovely day he has got now, hasn't he, for his journey?" returned Lady Fitzherbert, brightening. "Dear fellow!—he must be nearly half way there by this time. He won't sit with both windows down, I hope and trust. That's how it is so many bad colds are caught."

"Let's see—he will get there about—when?" asked Bella, thinking she must say something; and willing, if she must talk, to talk of that, which, though it sent a dagger to her heart at every word, she seemed to feel a savage satisfaction in dwelling on exclusively.

"He said about nine o'clock, didn't he love? Poor boy! how tired he will be. They'll be sure to well air the sheets, I hope. I must write to Esther to-morrow, and dear Lucy."

"The danger, if any, will have been incurred by then, I'm afraid," smiled Bella.

"That's true," assented Lady Fitzherbert, wiping away a tear. "I don't know what's come to my poor head to-day."

"I can fancy, what a happy little party they'll be at supper to-night," said Bella, picking away again at the rosebuds, and feeling she'd give the world to be a little bird.

"I'd give a guinea," said Lady Fitzherbert, "to be able to take a peep at them, unseen."

"I'd give a hundred!" exclaimed Bella, "that I would—to see how—how—"

"He has borne the journey, poor boy! And so would I, love. We shall hear on Thursday—that he promised me—all about it. Dear me, how close it is! Won't that be delightful, dear? He is such a famous hand at a portrait. It's to be a daguerreotype, he says."

"A beauty, I can fancy," replied Bella, elatedly—"of Annie I mean. How I long to see it! A *blonde*, though, is not Lord Fitzherbert's taste exactly."

"Not at all, love—no, not the least. Don't you think, dear—I do—Emma Sommersley—for her style—is, as near as possible, of the very first order of female beauty?—the very first!"

"Very beautiful, certainly—but—"

"A little stern, perhaps, you mean. That, dear, is her character—like her mother. What thinks Cecil, darling?"

"I never heard him say particularly," replied Bella, feeling she was on tender ground; but still, somehow, being sensible of very different emotions when talking of Emma Sommersley, to those which she experienced when Annie Lawton was the theme of admiration,—"never heard him speak otherwise than in the highest terms of Lady Emma. Indeed,

I know no one who stands higher—I may say, so high, I think, in his esteem."

"Of that I am positive, love," responded Lady Fitzherbert, evidently gratified.

"There can be no doubt, either, I fancy," continued Bella, "where Lady Emma's good taste is best shewn, too?"

"So I flatter myself, dear. No,—there can be no doubt of that."

"It's evident to every one," pursued Bella.

"And yet," hesitated Lady Fitzherbert—"do you know, love, I have often felt a little doubtful, whether Cecil himself quite thought so, as much as I would have him—out of love alone would have him. Look, what an alliance, love, that would be!"

"Yes, indeed—what an alliance!" repeated Bella.

"Of course, this is between ourselves, love. You know how my heart is set on it. Yes—that *would be* a match worthy, every way worthy—of my darling boy."

Now, this was the first time, although Emma Sommersley's merits had been the constant subject of their conversations, that Lady Fitzherbert had ever spoken out so warmly and decidedly; and, yet, strange to say, never had Bella felt more satisfied to listen to her praises, or to contemplate with less anxiety the consummation of another's happiness, the fulfil-

ment of which could only be simultaneous with the destruction of her own, than at that moment.

How it might have been, had there been no such being as Annie Lawton in the world, we cannot tell; but we can suppose; and, if we are right, poor Lady Emma owed Bella very little for her hypocritical praises and patronage that afternoon.

A party of equestrians cantering by at this moment put a stop to the conversation; and, gracefully raising his hat, Nugent Harvey pulled up, and exchanged greetings with the ladies.

"Charming day for his journey!" said Nugent Harvey, in answer to an exclamation of maternal solicitude from Lady Fitzherbert at mention of Cecil's name. "And went off quite happy, did he?"

"Happy as a lark!"

A slight shade of disappointment passed for an instant over Lady Fitzherbert's brow, and a deeper far over Bella's; which, intently though his eyes were fixed on her at the moment, Nugent Harvey was prevented seeing in its full effect, as, suddenly turning her head, Bella appeared to be looking at something passing at her side.

"In pretty good spirits, eh?" sighed Lady Edith. "I am so glad. You don't know, do you, if he went to Savory and Moore's?"

"Yes, yes," said Nugent Harvey, "an exemplary fellow! The quinine, eh, and opodeldoc?"

Lady Fitzherbert's eyes blinked, and brightened again. Comfort, however compounded, as long as it was to her taste, soon found its way to Lady Fitzherbert's heart.

"Dear boy!" exclaimed she. "I knew, love—" turning to Bella—"I knew—I was sure—he wouldn't disoblige me."

"Shall we see you this evening at the opera?" asked Nugent Harvey, addressing Bella.

"Not to-night, I think," said Lady Fitzherbert. "We neither of us feel very brave and blooming to-day. No—not to-night. But you will dine with us to-morrow?"

"To-morrow?" hesitated Harvey.—"no—not to-morrow, I think."

"Why not?" asked Lady Fitzherbert, a little disappointedly.

"Another day — no — not to-morrow," sighed Nugent Harvey, dropping his eyes on the "old horse's" mane, and stroking it with his whip handle. "But—but—if I can be of any use before Sam goes down on Friday—you know you have only to command me;—no—not to-morrow—not to-morrow."

"And why?" repeated Lady Fitzherbert, coaxingly; while a faint smile of derision, she could not repress, curled Bella's lip.

"O! if you must have it," said Harvey—"hang me, then, if I've the heart to come again to the old place, till I've had a thorough good blub, and that's the fact of it;" and, suddenly turning round "old horse's" head, and waving a hand—off he cantered after his friend; Lady Fitzherbert looking admiringly after him, and feeling much disposed, would he only have waited and had the good blub out then and there, to have borne him company and blubbed well out in concert; while Bella, spite of the gravity of the occasion, and every bit as inclined in her heart to "blub," and "blub" lustily, too, as any of them, must have burst out laughing, had not she felt sure that Lady Fitzherbert would never have forgiven such extremely bad behaviour.

"Kind, excellent heart!" exclaimed Lady Fitzherbert, throwing herself back in the carriage. "What Cecil will do without him, I don't know. What feeling—how true—how noble—how like himself!"

A cloud had settled over Bella's heart, and, do what she would, she could not shake it off.

"We will go home now," said Lady Fitzherbert, drawing the check string; "and, after dinner, you shall come love, to my room, and we'll look up the flower-patterns for Annie; and then I'll show you his miniature on ivory, taken by Persani, at Naples, when he was only seven years old, from which Lawrence took his picture—bless his heart!"

Once more safe in the delicious solitude of her chamber, sick and sad at heart, Bella threw herself on her bed, and, burying her face in her hands, thus lay absorbed in fervent prayer, till, Lady Fitzherbert's bell ringing, it was time to dress; and, rising much relieved, the dark cloud had all but vanished from her heart, when, with her usual sweet smiles, she again entered the drawing-room.

"First, let me pay my debts of honour, love," said Lady Fitzherbert, putting a half-crown in her ward's hand. "Do what I will, I can't get those piercing black eyes out of my sight—they quite haunt me."

While dropping the piece into her purse, Bella involuntarily heaved a slight sigh. Lady Fitzherbert turned, and scanning the pale cheeks for a moment, "You are not well, love," said she; "not my Bella at all. I insist, do you hear, that you see Dr. Chambers to-morrow when he calls."

Bella assured Lady Fitzherbert, that "she was quite well now; but her head had been so bad all the morning. Perhaps it was the weather."

"Perhaps so." How stifling it must have been, musn't it, for poor dear Cecil, shut up in that close carriage so many hours? And then, if he let down the windows, poor child! he was sure to take cold, He was so susceptible—was always so from his cradle; but God's will be done!"

Bella took a glance in the glass at her eyes, which

she had but five minutes before been sponging well with vinegar and rose-water. Well, I must have looked a fine figure in that old dowdy bonnet to-day," said she.

"Dowdy, indeed! Not in some eyes I could mention," smiled Lady Fitzherbert. "Ah! you may pretend. Do you think I'm blind? *N'importe*; dowdy or not—those are not quite my Bella's looks, and I won't have them any longer. I'll tell you what, love—we must take a trip somewhere, that's the truth of it;—where, darling, shall it be?"

Dinner served—the final decision of the knotty point—"where shall it be?" had to stand over for the present.

CHAPTER X.

MARKSBURY.

THE shades of a golden autumn evening were closing over the little village of Marksbury. The western sky was still illumined with the parting glories of a gorgeous sunset. It was one of those deliciously still, balmy evenings that so often accompany the first joyous greetings of the happy harvest-moon. Scarcely was there breath of wind enough afloat to stir even a rose-leaf, yet, the air was not sultry. Soft, sweet, refreshing showers had been falling during the early part of the day, barely sufficient to wet the earth, but enough to cool it, and to send floating on the breeze the fragrant perfumes of ten thousand flowers.

All nature seemed with congenial accord to have desisted from its labours, and to be calmly sinking, after the day's toils, into tranquil, thankful rest. Not

an object met the eye but told of some good work fulfilled, not a sound the ear but gladly echoed the exulting music of content and joy. Look which way you would, the abounding evidences of a beneficent Providence, conspicuous in all His works, and leaving nothing to be desired but the full measure, in return, of due appreciation and gratitude on the part of his children, met the gaze at every turn.

The hum of the honey-bees, hurrying homeward heavy laden, as Charlie Ferrers expressed it, from their errands of industry, had died away, and given place to the last sweet tinklings of the soothing weather-bells; while, mingled with the sonorous ringings of the blacksmith's forge, the impatient lowing of the milch cows, returning to their young; the loud laughs and vacant shouts of the village urchins, untiring at their games as if there were no future to re-unite them on the morrow, seemed to accord harmoniously with the farewell revels of the buzzing beetle, and the headlong bat, both which, having it all now fairly to themselves, seemed, like the boys and girls, determined to keep it up, and take their full; nor say good night, till, fairly tired out, and the moon well up reminding them it was time for all good, well-appointed folks to be a-bed, even they wheeled off at last to their respective cribs, —to sleep and snore, no doubt, as sound as tops,

and dream, for aught we know, of new schemes only of hope, and pride, and triumphs for the morrow.

O! it was a soul-inspiring sight for the peaceful spirit to contemplate, the gentle fall of such a glorious eventide, as we would fain depict, over such a little rural paradise on earth as was old Marksbury. And here please to understand, enquiring reader, that we allude, not to any sweet sequestered nooks there may be of the like name in any shires but our Hampshire. With that, our own dear Marksbury—and which ever will, we trust, be dear to us—we have alone to do just now. And this we deem it right to make understood at once, *in limine*, lest we should seem at any time to impute blame where it is not due, or, as unmeritedly, in the fulness of our love, lavish praises which we have only for *the one*. But, as *was* old Marksbury, was it not we said? Alas! yes. Even Marksbury has shared the almost universal change, and is not—and more's the pity a great deal—what it used to be. We say *was*, because that is—however painful to give it record—the plain verity of the case; and, though the great, busy, bustling world may care not a straw whether it be true or not, there are some hearts, and trusty, steady, staunch ones, too, who do care, and care a great deal, to know and feel assured, that whatever harm, as well as good, modern progress has brought with it to other pleasant places, Marksbury has had its full

share of the one and certainly not more than its fair share—Heaven help it!—of the other.

Yes, not only was old Marksbury as sweet a spot, as picturesquely charming a little village as you could find in merry England, taking it as a whole, but it was better still—as sociable a little place—sociable in the best sense of the word—as social heart could wish for. Old Marksbury, picturesque and pleasant as it was, regarded with poet or with painter's eye, unrivalled as it used to be for the prettiness of its situation, reposing so charmingly in the luxuriant lap of the beautiful chain of richly-wooded and well-watered hills by which—but on one side, where it looked over a broad expanse of gentle hill and dale, orchard land, corn fields, and fat pastures—it was surrounded, had other claims to admiration besides its sunny pictures, its sylvan glades, its brawling streams, and fresh, healthy-blowing breezes, enough to earn for it a pastoral fame imperishable. Marksbury was not only a sweet, but, we repeat, a sociable little place. And why should what is sweet be ever otherwise? Alas! is it now with Marksbury as with so many other earthly elysiums, a paradise—

> "Where the rose ever blossoms, the beams ever shine,
> And all, save the spirit of man, is divine?"

If so, all we repeat is—more's the pity. Better it were a wilderness, where no roses blossomed and

the beams never shone, and where men lived in Christian brotherhood together, as Christian brothers ought, than be such a paradise.

"Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife."

And, yet, it was a day, they say, of rejoicings and congratulations, when those oily-faced, plausible-tongued, busy, driving gentleman came cringing and canvassing, and prowling about, and pitching, their white wands, and marking and measuring all over thy green lanes, and purling brooks, and smiling meadows, sweet Marksbury! Thou hast got thy rail. True! And thy prim bricked gothic station-house. And the Squire's lady can run up to London, and buy herself and Miss Ann and Rosalie a darling new bonnet a-piece in Regent Street, and be home again, all happiness, to dinner. And Lady Buckram, of "The Thorns," have her ices and barley-sugar baskets and *bon-bons* down from Gunter's, without breaking, in a twinkling. And farmer Tadpole and his girls pop themselves into the eight o'clock—be at Vauxhall Bridge by twelve—do all the lions—hunt up cousin Robert—take an early cup of tea—and home again, and all right with the little purchases by supper-time.

There thou hast got poor old Master Walters, and the old "Defiance," with its eight miles an hour and long stops, fairly on the hip, good Tadpole. And

the doctor's lady, and the parson's lady, and the attorney's lady can snap their fingers at the squire's lady, and Miss Ann, and Lady Buckram of "The Thorns," and know as well as they, indeed, who's who, and what's what, we rather think so. But, O sweet Marksbury!—where are flown those becoming charms—thy best ornaments—of simplicity, modesty, and content, and harmony among thy children, which gave to their daily goings-out and their comings-in their first object, their best value, their truest pride, and joy, and honest profits?

What a change, verily, has come over the spirit of our dream! Thou art no more the same dear, simple, sensible, contented, happy old Marksbury that thou wert, than are thy little flock the same careful, thrifty, thriving, united, happy little flock we remember them in the old pastor's time—and that is but a few short years ago—before the march of *knowingness*, with the march of rail, came filling their silly heads with all sorts of upstart airs, and vain conceits; and their hearts, alas! with any thing but love, and charity, and peace. "It is not the rail," says Tadpole, "it's the march of hintellect." What more "hintellect" has Tadpole, since he got the rail—for no one ever heard Tadpole talk of his "hintellect" till then—he, Tadpole, and the Misses T. in their brocaded silks, and birds of Paradise, and pagoda parasols, must answer for themselves. One

thing is pretty certain,—if their "hintellects" are heavier, their purses are by no means in proportion. Hunting up town cousins, seeing the London lions, and laying in little purchases make terrible inrodes also into five-pound notes.

We cannot help thinking, if the brain stood them in as heavy a figure as the body, we should not be hearing Tadpole boasting of his "hintellects" as often as he does. In one respect the outlay might be regarded as a subject for congratulation—Tadpole's "hintellects" might, possibly, be the gainer. At present, the outsides of Messrs. Tadpole and Co's heads are better provided for, we fancy, than the in. If the march of "hintelleet" marched a little more good sense into Tadpole's head, and a little less money out of his breeches pockets; rather less false pride into his heart, and rather more of the needful into the Savings Bank, towards his daughters little portions, as it ought to do, there would be something to be said for it; but what good, at present, Tadpole's extra "hintellect," does him, with the utmost kindly interest for him, we confess we cannot see. As a race, the race of the Tadpoles is extensive. It is not confined, by any means, to top boots and leathern leggings. To suppose so, dear Messrs. Elegants and Exquisites, would be a great mistake. It comprehends, and equally takes in, without distinction, we assure you, all who, talking, like Tim

Tadpole, of their "hintellects," talk of what they know very little, if aught, we fear, about; which is proved, we imagine, in many more ways than one. What those ways are, is best learnt, no doubt, not by laughing at the Tadpoles, but by looking well *at home*. If we owed no other debt to modern progress, my dear Sir Noodle Nonsuch, we ought to be very grateful, that, turn which way we will—wanting the definition of a noodle, in all his noodleism—while we have you so near to tell us, we can never be at any great loss about it, without waiting for the arrival of a fresh batch by the next express up-train. Be assured there are great Tadpoles, my dear Sir Noodle, as well as little; and, if doubtful, intelligent reader, of the truth of it, in these "hintellectual times," only please to go any morning or evening to any of the great London *termini*, and, if you will but use the "hintellects" given you so plentifully, you will see them swarming there, of all calibres and capacities by hundreds, take our word for it.

What a pleasant sight it used to be, to see, assembled in Marksbury old Church, high and low, rich and poor, landlord and tenant, of all sexes and sizes, positions, politics, and peculiarities—one and all, seemingly, thereunto led, and therein offering up together, as Christian brethren ought, their prayers, and praises, and thanksgivings, under the same hallowed roof, inspired by the same one holy

sense of duty, and walking together in sweet unity of spirit and purpose, with one accord, one aim, one end, the same heavenward paths,

"The same bless'd ways—the ways that lead to God."

When was ever heard in Lancelot Lawton's days—spite of the learning of which he was so proud, the soarings of, at times, a too ambitious spirit, and Tabitha Ludlam's gentle freethinkings—of cavils, and crotchets, and distrusts, and dissensions between pastor and flock; of this innovation, and that innovation, this conscientious scruple, and that conscientious squabble, of sectarian quibbles and doctrinal disagreements, of quarrels on mere forms, of husband against wife, father against son, daughter against mother, servant against master, house against house, neighbour against neighbour, over some pious bone, like angry dogs, of unchristianly contention,—and all for what?—to determine, whether in black, or white—on foot, or on knee—standing, or sitting—with psalm, or hymn approached—with bowings, or without bowings—be-candled, or not be-candled, the Deity were best worshipped?

O no! In the old Vicar's days—whatever his faults—God's temple was not the arena chosen for the selfish, senseless contentions of his carnal, self-seeking creatures. It is a sad and sinful spectacle, to see to what lengths the pride, and vanity, and

deceitfulness of man's heart will lead him, even to the setting himself up as a judge of what is sufficient for his Maker.

And who so imbued to the lips with christian meekness, and humility, and love as your Reverend Mr. Innovator? From whose lips—to look at him, —would you expect to hear such words of love, peace and good-will to all mankind flow as from his; from whose hand so little think of seeing the fire-brand of anger and discord hurled into the bosoms of his flock as from his? To note his very christian-like demeanour, to see him smile, to hear him speak, and preach, and teach, you would say—had you eyes that saw not beyond the surface—not a lamb of his flock so pure, so meek, so innocent, so harmless as their shepherd—oh, how happy the flock, guided and guarded over by such a pastor!

To judge only by externals is ever to be in danger of judging without due judgment; but never more so than when we pass sentence hurriedly on pious fronts, which, like some other fronts, unhappily, of these our showy times, exposed for our patronage every day, turn out very often false. Never, indeed, in sober verity, have we had more reason to be on our guard—or the daily press deceives us—than in this our palmy eighteen hundred and fifty-seven. Really, the number of pious *fronts* around us is something serious. Well may Catholics watch us

wistfully, and, smiling in their sleeves, bide their time; nay, nothing heeding, lend a hand to lengthen the suicidal rope, and be well content to leave things to our Bishops.

Teeming as the age is with impostors, with false faces, and falser hearts at every turn, the pious *fronts* seem as plentiful and impudent as any of them. They must find it answer one would think? So, too confiding reader, beware, before you stake your little all upon the issue—beware, we pray you, above all, of *pious fronts*. They are not all necessarily false. O no! by no means. Pray do not misunderstand us. You may meet many genuine as well as many false ones in other public rendezvous than Exeter Hall. But this it is that calls for all the more caution from the unwary. The true and false are so commingled, partake so wonderfully of the same features, are clothed in proper vesture so alike, so follow the same paths, and have equal credit for the same unselfish ends, that the inexperienced may well be often duped, and, in their righteous indignation, lay all the blame to a system, which would never have existed, if, for every knave in this life, there were not a hundred fools in close attendance generally to be found.

How come to pass such things now in broad daylight in merry England, with a free press, too, and telegraphs and railroads almost to the moon? The

question is an interesting and important one; but involves so many others in connexion, no less grave and entertaining, that we must leave it for those to settle who have abler pens to do so than our own. Tim Tadpole says, "it's all owing to the march of hintellect." Hear him! Sir Noodle Nonsuch, that "it rests entirely with that horrid whirlpool of democracy which is sucking into its deadly gulph as fast as it can, and swallowing up all that is aristocratic, noble, manly, gentlemanly, and generous in poor old England." Which are we to believe?

Leaving Sir Noodle and Tim Tadpole to settle the point between them, which can be no very difficult matter, with "hintellects" like theirs, let us turn again to old Marksbury, and, losing sight of what it is, view it only in the more pleasing colours in which it stands presented to our mind's eye at this moment, when, we think we see, on the happy evening of Cecil Fitzherbert's expected arrival, Vicar Lawton walking restlessly up and down his snug, bay-windowed, little moss-pattern-carpeted study, looking on to the parsonage lawn and shrubberies; and ever and anon stopping to contemplate with fond eyes the little group of loving hearts there assembled in sweet fellowship under the old weeping ash; and then to consult his watch;—till, getting out of patience,—

"Strange he is not here by this time," said he to

the beau-ideal of a country pastor's wife in all her best of points, who sat putting the finishing stitches to a piece of worsted-work in her hand, and which she seemed to do mechanically, her fingers moving at a rate altogether impossible for eyes, one would have thought, though far younger and more far-seeing than Esther Lawton's, to keep pace with. "If he don't soon come now, I shall give him up for to-night."

"No accident *can* have happened, surely?" said Mrs. Lawton, laying down her work in her lap, putting up her spectacles in their shagreen-case, and walking to the window.

"Accident? no, no," replied the Vicar, stopping short. "Hark!—no—it's only Clough—brought back the tumbril."

"Well, we'll wait half an hour more, I think, said Mrs. Lawton; "that will give Hannah time to lay the cloth; and, if he don't come by then, we'll go to supper. He'll be here, for sure, to-morrow. As long as there's no accident, I don't care."

"Where are they scampering to now, I wonder," said the Vicar, bending forwards to follow Annie's figure, close attended by Clermont Onslow across the lawn, and, as fast as it could trudge after them, by the busy, bustling little person of Aunt Gertrude. "It isn't Lord Fitzherbert, is it, come?"

"No, sir. It's only old Mabel at the gate," explained Hannah, entering the room in answer to the bell.

"We are quite infested with those people," said Mrs. Lawton, disappointedly. "Really, something ought to—and shall be done—to put a stop to—"

"Tut, tut!" caught up the Vicar, impatiently. "Give her some bread, and send her off about her business."

Hannah had her own reasons for not being in a hurry with the "bread;" and, running round to the garden-gate:—

"Oh, Miss!" said she, "make haste—do—or your papa'll be out—and, my patience! there'll be such a flustercation. Your mamma do hate those gipsies so!"

"Not before I've had my fortune told, though, I'm determined," cried Clermont, putting a shilling in the old crone's hand. "And, after mine, Aunt Gertrude's, too, I've set my heart on it."

"Mine?" screamed Aunt Gertrude, enjoying the fun, with all her pretended decorum, as much as when she was sixteen. "Yes, to be sure, why shouldn't I have *my* fortune told?" and, taking the gipsy aside—a hearty laugh soon proved beyond a doubt, that Aunt Gertrude, at all events, was perfectly satisfied with *her* shilling's worth.

"Do, Miss, there's a dear! tell Mr. Clermont to make haste," whispered Hannah; "or your papa'll be out, sure as fate; and then, my gracious! there'll be such a rumpus with 'em all."

"You shall have time, don't be afraid," engaged Annie, "to have a husband, too, as well as Aunt Gertrude—take my word for it,"

"There, then—how provoking!" cried Hannah, "there's the bell again."

Aunt Gertrude, having nothing further on earth to wish for, and, really, in her heart—with all her independence, and the experiences of twenty-six summers, more or less, to back her—as pleased with the promise of a husband, if she chose to have one, as though she had not snapped her fingers at the men a hundred times at least, and made a half vow, as many fifties, to live and die a maid, gave way for Clermont, as one well able to afford others their share of happiness now she was contented with her own. Clermont, being quite willing that all the world, if it liked, should be witnesses of the bliss, no doubt, in store for him, would permit of no side whispers, or secret auguries, but, stretching forth his palm, desired to know, forthwith, his fate for weal or woe; conscious we will be bound for it, just as well as Aunt Gertrude—however he might affect an indifference it was utterly impossible, with two

such eyes as Annie Lawton's looking on, for him to feel—of an odd sort of sensation—what shall we call it?—as the gipsy crossed his hand; till, out of all patience—while she remained silent for some moments, as if buried in deep thought—and with the cloud gathering on his brow—

"Am I to have nothing for my shilling, then?" asked he.

"The other hand—not this one," replied Mabel.

"There, then—and another shilling, I suppose, to cross it with?" grumbled Clermont.

Mabel shook her head, while she closely scanned the lines in the other palm.

"Come, now, you've something more for my two shillings than that, I'm sure?" said Clermont; "or you're not half a fortune-teller."

"Will the lady hear?" hesitated Mabel, turning her lustrous eyes from Clermont to Annie, and then from Annie quick to Clermont; while Annie, intently watching the gipsy's face, seemed to be hanging breathlessly on her words, as if they were the presages of life or death to her.

"O yes!—the lady may hear every word of it," cried Clermont. "But make haste about it, there's a good mother! or I shan't get my fortune, plague take you! before supper; and there's poor Hannah, there, dying with impatience, don't you see, for hers?"

"Hark!" said Mabel, raising her forefinger to impose silence—"hark!—

The cuckoo comes with his pretty song,
Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo.
To hear him, you'd think he could do no wrong,
He sings so loud, and he sings long
His cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo.

Isn't it pleasant to hear him sing
Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?
Joy and glad tidings it seems to bring,
And the sweet summer, too, as well as the spring,
That Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo.

Why comes he hither so far to bring
Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?
Why wearies he thus his pretty wing;
Cannot he stop at home and sing
His cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?

Maiden, the poor bird will tell thee best—
Hark! cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo—
There mourning the loss of his rifled nest,
Why hither he comes to enjoy his rest,
With his cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo."

"Poh, nonsense! mother," cried Clermont, impatiently,—at which moment Mrs. Lawton made her appearance on the lawn, ringing a little silver hand-bell to call them to supper, much to poor Hannah's

vexation,—"what, in the name of patience, has all that do with my fortune?"

But there was no time for any more talk about it. The little hand-bell was imperative; and, with a flushed brow, the very reverse of Annie's, which was unusually pale—attributed by Aunt Gertrude, and, with perfect sincerity, to the hot weather—Clermont Onslow took his supper-place, as usual, at the Vicar's right hand.

Not one of the little supper-party seemed much inclined for conversation that evening. Cecil's non-arrival, no doubt, had thrown rather a damp on their spirits. Aunt Gertrude was the only one who talked; but then she had a capital twelve-penny-worth for her shilling. But even Aunt Gertrude found it difficult long to talk alone; and, wishing good-night, after an ineffectual effort to draw Clermont out, took herself off. Annie soon followed; and a *tête-à-tête* with the Vicar not at all harmonizing somehow, just then, with Clermont's feelings, he soon sought his chamber, too. But the words of the gipsy's song still sounded dolefully in his ears; nor, though he took his books—then seized his pen—then, throwing himself on his bed, tried his best in sleep to banish the form of the old hag from his thoughts, could he succeed in composing himself for a long while to rest; and then only to

hear again and again repeated, as if in mockery of his restlessness, those strange words;—what could they mean?—

"Maiden, the poor bird will tell thee best,
There mourning the loss of his rifled nest,
Why hither he comes to enjoy his rest,
With his cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo;"

till, fairly worn out, he sank into a deep sleep—and dreamt, that he saw, as plain as life, Cecil Fitzherbert at the altar, and Annie Lawton in bridal apparel, and looking beautiful as an angel, at his side; and Aunt Gertrude in a white and silver dress be-flowered all over with orange-blossoms; and Mrs. Lawton, with one of Annie's hands in hers, the picture of woe, and crying ready to break her heart; and the church up to the ceiling full of wondering faces; and the Vicar, in his surplice and with book in hand, just going to pronounce a blessing on their heads in a voice that made him tremble;—and he felt choking; and, in his efforts to cry out and forbid the banns, he awoke;—not a little relieved, to find it was all a dream.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "CUYP."

No sweeter spot, of its class, spite of its prim, stuck-up station-house, and little official pepper-box cottages dotted about here and there, did Nature ever fashion in her sweetest mood, than where, in the bosom of all that is rurally pretty and pleasant, nestles Marksbury. 'Tis, in fact, a spot that, once seen by poet's or painter's eye, must ever remain treasured, if they think as we do, among their sweetest pictorial associations—one of those exquisite little *Gainsborough* master-pieces of the picturesque nowhere to be found in such perfection as in the rural nooks of home-endearing England. Turn which way you would, under the aspect we most love to regard it—the aspect of the past—it was a picture of pastoral beauty, of simplicity, and content, and peace—as far as this life can

know it—beaming with fondest thoughts of home and loving hearts, and artless tastes, and humble happiness, and welcoming smiles that greeted you at every turn. In its general features, as a country village, Marksbury differed but little from hundreds of others of a like simple, rural kind.

As you strolled down its principal street, if it deserve the name—conspicuous, of course, as usual, were the bakers' and butchers' shops, with their little sunny green side-doors and bright brass knockers on them; and Miss Tabitha Ludlam, the post-mistress—and what Tabitha wanted with those spectacles on her nose, with such a pair of piercers in her head, if folks told true, nobody could conceive; and Master Ghrimes, the chandler's, the biggest don of them all—and what made him so, either Erskine Sharp, the attorney-at-law, or Jane Bayley there, of the 'Hen and Chickens,' could have told you in a moment if you asked them, or poor old Widow Collins opposite, if you preferred it, with that solitary consumptive-looking candle hanging on a nail over the dresser, and those dirty dregs she had just brought in from "the shop," for sugar, at Heaven knows what a-pound; then Ralph Champion, the smith, substantial fellow for a friend, but terrible as a foe, by all accounts; and Lizzy Horner's little nondescript emporium of so many more usefuls and ornamentals than books by the

dozens, stationary, toys, perfumery, and fishing-tackle, and what not else, that it is impossible to enumerate them; and Tobias Yeates, the clerk and sexton—and a deep, mysterious personage was Tobias, better versed, they said, in Marksbury's history for the last three generations than all the rest of the village, not excepting Andrew Leete, the barber, and Master Paul Whittingham, the schoolmaster—with a head, and a tongue in it, too, almost as clever as the Vicar's, put together; and last, but not least, Dan Dunlop, the doctor's house next Tabby's, remarkable for its brace of venerable yews on either side his door, with its blazing brass-plate setting forth where the lieges could find, if they would only know where they were well off—

> "Draughts, bolus, pills,
> To cure all ills,
> Past, present, and to come."

As you strolled, we say, down this its principal street, or turned off into any of its diverging smaller ones, or, crossing its pleasant meadows, came round again, by the Squire's, to the high-road,—there was little more in themselves, though abounding in charming points, than might be found in hundreds of other rural nooks of a like pictorial character. But it was when, having cleared the village and taken the path along the wood-side

towards the Vicarage, you reached the more high and open ground immediately overlooking the Parsonage, that a scene was opened to your view which, though neither painter nor poet, you must have been very unpoetical indeed could you have contemplated without extreme delight.

There, on a verdant rising knoll, green in summer as an emerald, soft as velvet, and shaded from the sun's rays by the luxuriant hazel-clumps and thick belt of firs by which it was pretty well encircled, the Vicar had built a sort of rustic bower, overrun with sweet-scented creepers, intermingled with the ivy and wild honeysuckles that grew in profusion thereabouts, forming a little canopy of calm delights, wherein, retreating from the noonday heat, he would often, with book in hand, or with a friend at his side, after their ascent of the hill, love to repose awhile—to enjoy in perfection his "Cuyp," as he called it, spread out before him, and expatiate on those spirit-soothing themes, which, "above all others," he would say, "while they exalt and glorify the Creator, are most elevating and ennobling to his fallen creatures."

But not only was it the "Cuyp" that drew the Vicar, proud as he was, and with good reason, of it, so often to the hill-top. The spot had an especial charm, we suspect,—inasmuch as, there seated apart from the rest of the world, and in communion

with his own heart, he could look down like a good pastor on his flock, and, as he cast a fond father's gaze around him, take in almost at a glance every object endeared to him by a thousand recollections. Nor do we believe but that the sight of his own chimney-pots, with their "smoke gracefully curling," and peeping out, in the hollow, from the little forest of rich foliage in which they seemed embowered, and the heart-endearing associations connected therewith, was a most essential object in the landscape. For, by the least possible stretch of the imagination, coupled with tolerably good eyes, might be discerned the vine-clad front and ivy-clustered porch of the Parsonage, smiling invitingly through an opening here and there made on purpose in the trees—a venerable, solid, cumbrous, brick-built structure for its size, of heaven only knows what exact class and order, which, though vastly inferior perhaps, for elegance, to our more modern rectories and vicarages, was, to our eye, worth a thousand of them all, for those fine old English features of accessibility, open-heartedness, and hospitality—to say nothing of their super-eminent superiority as picturesque features in the landscape—which, travel from Cornwall to the Kentish coast, with but few exceptions, are gone for ever—to be remembered only among those many fondly-treasured recollections and associations, which there are

yet hearts true and staunch enough, amidst all the pretensions and puffery of modern times, to call up to the credit of the good old ones we hope and trust.

And not only might the chimney-pots of the old Parsonage be distinguished peeping over the tree-tops; but there, just beneath, wasn't there, richly loaded with flowers and fruits unnumbered, a perfect pattern of a little lawn, and weedless well-stocked garden, and filbert-walks, and rosy apple-orchards; and, across the paddocks hard by, Colly, and Molly, and Brindle lashing their tails in the sun, and lovingly licking each other's gentle faces; and his Reverence's old fat, pudgy, white pony, sleek as a mole, in the shade by the side of the haystack, under wing of that cluster of fine old chestnuts; and the rich glebe beyond basking in the plenitude of its teeming harvest hopes; and there, a stone's-throw hardly from the paddocks, the snug home-farm yard, with its big, brown old ricks, and stacks, and groaning barns, its ducks, and geese, its turkeys, and its guinea-fowls, dove-cot, and famous pig-sties, full to overflowing; and Humphrey, at work rubbing down old "Socrates;" and Nep there, half-asleep in the sun, stretched at full length, and the old hens filching the sweetest morsels from his dish like that, and the audacious little chicks hop-

ping so saucily about his sagacious old nose; and away, ten minutes stroll across the meadows, the village taking its noon-tide nap—except when the sharp ringing of Ralph Champion's hammer, or the dulcet melody of the tinker's donkey woke up the echoes from their drowsiness;—wherefore can we wonder that the Vicar loved his pleasant rustic bench on the hill-top so much?—from which he could look down on, spread out at his feet, as it were, all the treasures of the world—of that *his* world—to him his all,—and which—but for one wish—hardly whispered to himself, so ungrateful of him to indulge it did he deem it, he would not have exchanged for all the wealth of the Indies placed at his command.

Nothing could be more natural, nor, so far, more amiable or estimable than this love for his little hill-top contemplations on the part of Vicar Lawton. He might well be proud of his "Cuyp;" and, had he been contented in the possession of that sweet picture, with knowledge of no wish beyond—no matter how long nor how often he gazed delighted on his treasure, found fresh beauties in it every day and made it the choice companion of his best resolves. He could not have had a safer friend to fly to in his hours of meditation. But, beautiful as was his "Cuyp," matchless as he considered it as work, highly as he prized it, gratefully as he appre

ciated the value of its possession, undeserving even as he deemed himself of any thing so precious—yet there was the wish—the *one* wish unfulfilled.

Strange perversity! Alas! Vicar Lawton was but mortal. Had that one wish been fulfilled—still, with all, an ever wishing, wanting, carnal, craving creature! Grant him but that *one* wish, and Vicar Lawton would be happy. It sometimes happens that the wish is granted, and we, perhaps, thank God for it, and put it to the score of our merits. How if it be no earnest of His favour? How if it be but an addition made by ourselves to the idols shall most surely lash us? Our inflictions! Oh! how can the wise and good, in the main, be so unjust and cruel to themselves? How it must often pain that God, who willeth no harm to his creatures, but, rather, that they should be happy if they would,—to hear himself besought untiringly, and in the teeth of his written will and clearest warnings, for those things that, if granted, would be certain misery and woe! How happy they! who, masters of their "Cuyp;" like Lancelot Lawton—having at their command all that reasonable heart need wish for—are sensible of the value of the TRUST—ask not for more, but rather to be made sufficiently worthy of what they already have. If proud man, in his dreams of ambition, would but think of the fearful load of responsibility, be his station what it may, already on him, he

would, abashed at his own weakness and incapacity, shrink, terror-struck, at the bare thought of tiring his God—absolutely to *increase* the weight of the load which is already crushing him—poor frail, weak one! to destruction.

Vicar Lawton, but for one wish, would have been quite happy. So Vicar Lawton said, spite of his better sense, oftentimes to his heart, notwithstanding it smote him for the thought. What was that one wish? Lancelot Lawton was, in the main, what is called a good man, and deserved the appellation. His head was excellently well stored with all that scholastic lore, a keen observation, and correct judgment could impart. His boyish proficiency was something extraordinary, his school renown no less so, and his college achievements triumphant in the extreme. So, it was only for Lancelot Lawton, Vicar of Marksbury, and with more honourable *et cætera* to his name than his modesty would permit us to record, to intimate his willingness to receive the son of a nobleman to read with him, and peers' sons in plenty were only too ready to partake of his board, and benefit by his brains.

It is not necessary to our purpose that we should dwell on the early history of Lancelot Lawton. There was nothing either uncommon, or, beyond the interest inseparable from the contemplation of great and rising talent, that would be particularly enter-

taining in it. If his head was well stored with the right stuff, no less, in a great measure, was his heart; though, had as much pains been bestowed on the cultivation of the latter as on the former, it might have made his happiness more certain, and his interests no less so. How is it, that the luminary of learning has a heart often hardly, it would seem, larger than a nutmeg and not one half as soft, while the lubberly dunce rejoices in the possession of that organ big and brimful as a beef-steak pudding? In Lancelot Lawton's case, this, a very common consequence of a shrewd head—we mean a hard heart—did not apply. Though, to the passing observer, the countenance of the Vicar, in his meditative moods which were frequent, might seem stern, it was no true index of his heart; unless that might be called stern and severe which was but a type of the inflexible determination of his purpose in what he conceived to be the right course of duty and propriety. Then he would wear a very grave look, indeed; but, let the occasion for praise, or joy, or pity, or sympathy present itself, and in a moment how animated with every kindly, and anxious, and generous emotion could that stern face become—shedding light, and cheerfulness, and sanction, and encouragement on all around it.

Lancelot Lawton's was one of those firm, fixed, uncompromising natures that appeared to know no

middle course with vice and virtue. As virtue found no stauncher champion than Vicar Lawton, so had vice, in all its features, seemingly, to deal with no steadier or more unflinching foe. Truth and goodness never quailed beneath the fire of his glance, but falsehood, meanness, and duplicity shrunk abashed under the condemning judgment of his stern, determined frown. Those who knew the Vicar well, esteemed him greatly, not more for his deep and varied learning, than for the general soundness of his principles of conduct, and, where the object was worthy of it, the ever ready kindness of his heart; but by those not so well acquainted with him, he might be said, perhaps, to be more an object of respect than love. It is surprising how many there are, and of the best, who seem to have the most unamiable propensity for keeping all, but the select admitted few, at arm's length; when, in truth, their hearts, apparently selfish and shut up, are overflowing, on all sides, with the richest milk of kindest human nature.

How was it, that one hour would see Lancelot Lawton, the picture of humility, by the ingle-side of some poor old crone—comforting, and encouraging her to bear her load patiently and submissively like a Christian—to have no wish but contentedly to do His will, and to be found worthy of the high vocation whereunto she was being called,—and, the next, find

him treading the earth with stately strides, and, head *in nubibus*, snuffing the clouds, and lost in a maze of archiepiscopal sees—lawn-sleeves—fat stalls—and merciful Heaven only knows what else?—till, having reached his favourite meditation point, he would look again calmly and composedly on his "Cuyp."

But, somehow, that day it had lost some of its ruling charm. Was it that the light by which he viewed it was then too strong, too sudden, too trying; or was it that he was out of health—perhaps a little jaundiced? "The Cuyp" was just the same—he knew that,—as when, but yesterday, he gazed on it for hours with delight and pride. What could have come to him? Now the light grew better—mellower—and he saw more clearly;—but, still, the colours seemed less sweetly blended—the conception not so happy—the groupings more confused—the keeping far from perfect. And, rising from his reverie, the Vicar, ill at ease—with these fits on him—would retrace his steps down the hill-side to his home, and, shutting himself up in his study, search well his heart; but, skilled as he was above most men in unveiling the secret workings of that mysterious organ in others, utterly failed, or would seem to have failed Lancelot Lawton, in discovering the plague spot that, holding dominion, had that day, and many more, dimmed his own moral vision, and bound him down, little as he thought it, the

slave, alas! of that besetting sin—truth compels to the admission—of his order—priestly pride, and too much self-esteem.

In all climes and communities it is pretty much the same thing. Though clad in sackcloth, the priest is a proud man. Where there is most unity of religious rule and observance, there will be least of the pride in question. Where hardly ten persons that you meet are of the same creed, how expect but that your Priesthood shall have divers ends to serve, too, of their own? Though our Catholic neighours can no longer twit us with our "one sauce,"—seeing how hard Alexis Soyer works to remove that scandal from us, and how well he has succeeded,—they are wondering as much as ever at our manifold religions; a serious scandal, in truth; till we can rid ourselves of which, we may look in vain, they say, for unity, and, therefore, for content.

Lady Fitzherbert spoke not without knowledge when she said that, "Vicar Lawton looked high." Had such an idea been only whispered in his hearing, probably he would have started, and repudiated with indignation anything so very opposite to his nature. Yet high, very high, in truth, did Lancelot Lawton look. As a junior branch of one of the best old county-family trunks in Huntingdonshire, with some aristocratic blood, too, in his veins, Lancelot Lawton, come to that, had as much right to toss his head as

Lady Fitzherbert herself. But, if Vicar Lawton was ambitious, it was not on the strength of his blood or pedigree. He loved his "Cuyp." It was all that heart could wish, so far. But he had dreamt of a picture on the other side of the hill, surpassing all he had ever seen; and, oh what joy to be the possessor of such a master-piece! Nor are we sure but that the sin, if any, might not be laid with quite as much justice to Lady Fitzherbert's door, as to Vicar Lawton's. For, until one day in conversation with Dr. Vaughan, on the Castlemore question, she dropped some remarks relative to the Linwood Rectory and, furthermore, was pleased to add, "how it would, one of these days, if Clermont Onslow decided for the army, just suit Lancelot Lawton when old Worthington was gone;" and, thereupon, the good Doctor, ever foremost to be the carrier of glad tidings, thought it his duty no less than his great privilege to make known, among other pleasant matters of discourse between them, the possibility of such an event, before long, as a removal of the present Marksbury Incumbent and family to the rich living of Linwood coming off,—such a thought as ever parting in earnest with his "Cuyp" had never entered the Vicar's head. But, since that luckless letter, a strange change certainly seemed to have come over the Vicar's dream; but of what compounded, or whereunto exactly tending, had

he been asked, he scarcely could have told, perhaps, himself, much less we pretend to tell our readers for him.

It is clear, however, that, from that day, Castlemore and all connected with it occupied much more of his thoughts, spite of Esther Lawton's anxious sighs and gentle counsellings, than it had ever done before; though often, long before Lady Fitzherbert's friendly dispositions towards him reached his ear, he might have been heard, but only casually, to risk a guess as to who would succeed Peter Worthington at Linwood; beyond which, and a passing tribute to his many merits, the subject, we are bound to believe, had no further interest for him or his family. But when, as if the Doctor's first letter about it were not enough, another came confirming every word; and furthermore, as if to cap all, another quickly after that, to request, by Lady Fitzherbert's particular desire, that he would receive Cecil under his roof and be to him a father and preceptor, like as he was to his cousin Clermont Onslow, the Vicar's day dreams took a more distinctive form and shape, and for a time, the "Cuyp" seemed almost to be forgotten.

Days passed; and although, while to and fro on his pastoral visits to one and the other, he must have often taken the path by the hill-side, not once had he found time to spare more than a passing peep at

the "Cuyp," and then only to compare it with the surpassing master-piece that now engrossed all his thoughts—his other "Cuyp"—afar—in the happier valley yonder—the perfection of human bliss!—till, on the day of Cecil's expected arrival, an old thought seemed to come over him; and, seizing his hat and stick, and calling Nep to accompany him, he bent his way to the hill top, and, taking his accustomed seat, something like the following train of cogitations passed across his mind.—"How calm and peaceful," thought, as a passing cloud veiled for a moment the sun's full light, "looked his 'Cuyp' again. He had not seen it now for several days—it seemed an age! Could there be anything more lovely? Could he ever have the heart to tear himself away from it? He almost thought he never could! How strangely things fell out! But would Lord Fitzherbert make himself contented with their simple, quiet life? By the by—Humphrey must get the loose box ready for Di. Ah! there were Annie and Clermont rambling together on the hill-side; and Clermont, with his hand full of wild-flowers for their next Lindley lecture. His child—his only one—his darling—beautiful Annie! Heaven bless her!—she deserved a father's fondest love. And Clermont—yes, he was a noble fellow!—would make a figure in the world some day. Lord Fitzherbert, too,—why shouldn't he be somebody? He hadn't seen him now for four

years; and then he thought he never saw features of that cast, so faultlessly moulded! A splendid match for Lady Emma!—though he had heard that neither of them cared any great deal for each other. Dark men rarely chose, he thought, dark women for their wives. Wondered where that gipsy, Annie, was scampering to now?—Ah! after Gerty, to show her her flowers, he supposed. Heaven bless her! Where find her equal, hardly, for beauty and true goodness? Would she might ever be as free from care at that moment! How devotedly fond she was of Clermont, and he of her! It was high time now he thought of a profession. Must see, and have some serious talk with his mother about it. He was losing too much time. It was his duty both to the parent and the child. He took blame to himself for not having urged it oftener. How odd things happened!

"Lady Emma must be three years older, at least, than Cecil. He knew how Lady Fitzherbert had set her heart on the match, and it would be his duty and delight to promote her wishes to the best of his power. But, if he did not misjudge him, Lord Fitzherbert's was one of those tempers which would not be driven. He might be lead—lead by judicious handling. Well, he should see—and act to the best of his judgment and ability. Couldn't help thinking—those fond looks of Clermont's for Annie told another guess-sort of tale than Gerty

pleased to own to. Well, true, Clermont was a noble fellow! Annie might well love him—love him as few sisters loved a brother—everybody must love him—Annie loved every one who was good, and kind, and sensible like herself. His first thought was her happiness. For her sake alone had he—beyond doing his master's work—an earthly ambitious hope, or wish beyond that valley. He coveted not great wealth, nor titles, nor distinction for his child. Where she could give her heart—be her choice for whomsoever it might—so that it was worthy of her,—there should his blessing follow, and he knew she would deserve it. As far as rank went, and name, and lineage—the name of Lawton might, without blushing, stand by the side of Castlemore. But he knew the foolish vanity of all that. That never troubled his head. No!—his trust was, he hoped, "built on a rock,"—mentally exclaiming which, the Vicar calmly rose from his seat—and slowly retraced his steps, pondering as he went, down the hill side—"a rock, which, when all else had passed away — titles — honours — temporalities — all the glories that this world could boast of—would abide the same for ever!"

On arriving at his gate, "Well done," he cried, cheerily, to Annie, who, espying him coming up the shrubbery, ran, loaded with her floral prizes, to be the first to meet him;—"well done! and a famous lecture

we'll have from Clermont all about them. But you are never going, I am sure, to welcome Lord Fitzherbert in that straw poke, and that old washed-out morning frock?"

"You don't mean change that pretty poke, Sir, surely," interposed Clermont, coming up as the Vicar made his appearance with Annie on the lawn. "Well then, I declare, I'd rather see Miss Lawton in that old poke—old as it is!—than in the finest new bonnet the Squire's lady ever wore."

"Tut, tut," said the Vicar, "what do you understand about poke bonnets, I should like to know? Fiddle-de-dee! What says Aunt Gerty to it all?"

Aunt Gertrude, thus appealed to, looked up from the book she was reading; and, turning her eyes towards the poke,—"frightful!" said she. "Go and change it!—I should think so,—or don't I know somebody, in her white chip and double violets, will be my Lady, that's all?"

"Would I stand that? Highty—tighty! what next?" smiled the Vicar.

"Which shall it be?" whispered Annie, with a side look at Clermont, and stooping, just were he stood, to gather a pansy,—"the poke, then, or pale primrose?"

"Oh! of course!—which *you* like better," said Clermont, adding some mignionette and sprigs

the bouquet. "Whichever *you* think
nost—of course."
you think?" persisted Annie, still
to the roundest heartsease of the

w," replied Clermont, pricking his
to reach a briar-rose that took his

me!" cried Aunt Gertrude, looking at
time for us to be about it, if we mean
, dear, to-day. Let's see—I think the
lin will do very well for you, Annie,
u Clermont? And, let's see—yes—as
ing—I shall treat you all with a sight
unced brown and white silk *barège* to-
ill! So, those who think of being my
tter just make haste, and look sharp
dvise them."
think so," laughed Clermont, wishing
hat Aunt Gerty was some twelve years
s beautiful as an angel.
looked the 'Cuyp' to-day?" asked
taking the Vicar's arm to the glass

as ever!" said the Vicar. "By the
booby!—I quite forgot, then—that I
t what I went for,—to look and see if
new weathercock over the turret clock's

in keeping. That obstinate donkey, Cheffing, has painted it bright scarlet, hasn't he? What, in pity's name, could I have been thinking of?"

"Of my Lady Gertrude Fitzherbert—who knows," laughed Aunty. "Zounds! who could think of weathercocks, or anything else, I should like to know, eh, Clermont? when—

"A great lord, all jewels from top to toe,
Was coming Aunt Gerty for to woo?"

CHAPTER XII.

EUREKA.

and conflicting, as may be supposed, eculations hazarded at the Parsonage le next morning, as to the cause of rbert's non-arrival according to expec- ased, as it happened, to a mysterious ne presence of Dan Dunlop, or, rather, is pardon, Dr. Daniel Dunlop, who ped in, after seeing a near patient, with ot for "July snow-balls," for Annie's ery-book, took his chair and cup of Aunt Gertrude with an ease and free- owed it was not the first time by many tched his legs indulgently under that ahogany; but kept Mrs. Lawton in a get during the meal, to come at what d think, or what he did not, on the

point in question; though a cleverer fellow, in more things than his diploma, had the good schools of Edinburgh rarely turned out than Daniel Dunlop.

Esther Lawton knew this very well, and gratefully acknowledged it as she ought, when, after three long months' suffering from rheumatic fever, caught one bitter cold day while standing in the snow at Betsy Gibbs' funeral with only his surplice on, the Vicar left off his flannel nightcap, and the Doctor sending his four draughts every day. But she was apt to forget that the Doctor was a Scotchman, or, if not quite Scotch, at all events very far north, or she would have known better than to expect an answer before it seemed to him perfectly expedient to give one. One would have thought, that seeing the Doctor almost every day as she did, she would have found this out; but no such thing, and it was most amusing to observe how artfully the hook was sometimes baited, and with what dexterity, like a true Northern, he avoided being caught.

"Yes, true," agreed the Vicar, chiming in with some remark of Esther's, relative to their disappointment. "What do you think, Doctor?"

"I was thinking," replied Dunlop, cracking his first egg with that systematic precision which characterized, more or less, all he did. "I was thinking what could possibly be the reason."

do think something *may* have hap-
up Esther, looking alarmed.
ope not," replied the Doctor.
odd, though, isn't it?" pursued

rsued the Doctor, helping Clermont
some tongue; "there's nothing odd,
e? when you know the reason."
s just what we all want to find out,"
rty; "but there seems no coming at
r reason about it to-day."
you think, Mr. Clermont?" asked the

ldn't wonder," said Clermont, slightly
Annie's eyes met his, "if Lord Fitz-
to see the new ballet they are talking
t in London."
at's that?" inquired the Doctor, hand-
Aunt Gertrude. "True—not impos-

ou heard of it?" asked Clermont. "All
ad about it! Taglioni's best, they
ion's Honeymoon.' Isn't it a funny

on's Honeymoon!'" repeated the Doc-
tring the ends of his second egg before
the attack. "Mercy on us! and how is
I wonder?"

"End?" laughed Aunt Gertrude; "how should it end? As all moons end that ever *I* saw, to be sure—pitch dark for a bit; then, come bright skies, out peeps a little, weak, sickly, make-believe of a new one, looking half ashamed of itself; till, getting saucier and saucier—it grows as big and brazen as that china plate; and so on they go—smaller and larger—and larger and smaller, the inconstants!—always changing—never the same for six days long together—not a pin to choose between them."

"Honeymoons ever the like of that?" groaned the Doctor; "no—now never!"

Esther Lawton "couldn't say; but adhered to the possibility of some accident having occurred to Lord Fitzherbert—that alone was what troubled her."

"It was possible," admitted the Doctor. "He had himself heard of highwaymen on that road."

"Yes," confirmed Esther. "And she knew a striking instance she could vouch for. She might have mentioned it before. It was once, when her grandmother was going with her grandfather—one lovely summer's evening—in their open carriage across Hounslow Heath. Just as they got to about the middle of the Heath—her grandfather was a man of wonderful nerve!—up dashed a horseman—quite the gentleman, by his look and manners—up he dashed at full gallop—and, drawing a pistol—"

enough, a drop or two of scalding
, we suppose, the wrong way at this
the Vicar almost convulsed with
uch an extent, indeed, that the Doctor
o leave his egg, and stand over him,
n the back, for nearly half a minute;
g a present stop to the story, has
der cruelly of, perhaps, as graphic a
'urpin as ever was told of him, and
he pleasure of giving it in Esther's
way.

rses had run away—or a wheel had
h things had happened—" observed
siding with Esther, who, she saw,
ppointed at being cheated out of her
would have delayed him, wouldn't it?"
s there were no bones broken, nor
sther did not mind so much. But it
l road that, between Braybrook and
-where Lord Fitzherbert would, no
chaise and post-horses to Marksbury.
ght be as well, if the Doctor would
ne as much as possible that day."

hoped and trusted there would not
st occasion for anything of the sort.
vton, he was sure, would excuse him
ing out to her—as an important
ct, affecting that correct view which

it was so necessary always to take, in considering, and reducing to practice, the various diagnostic characteristics of the several accidents and ailments to which the human frame was subject,—that it was by no means essential—to constitute, she would understand, a case for medical treatment—there should be, in any case, a fracture of any part whatever of the osseous system—either simple, as they called it technically, or compound. And, if she would just allow him—and Miss Gertrude would have the kindness to wait one moment—he would explain, in a word, how it was—that—"

But a peculiar, and rather alarming spasmodic twitching of the corners of the Vicar's mouth coming on unmistakeably again all of a sudden, for no assignable reason, unless it might be that the throat was in such a state of sensitiveness that the slightest irritation, caused by even swallowing a crumb, was too much for it,—up jumped Esther, which, in his turn, cutting short the Doctor—mortifyingly enough, the reader is again left in the dark, and the opportunity perhaps lost for ever of our being enabled to record a principle in physics, which, if not altogether a new light to the faculty, comes with a weight and importance, supported by such an authority as Dan Dunlop, that, among our numerous medical friends, might have been the making of this our little work. But regrets are

we can hope is, that the Doctor
et again to open in our hearing the
is extensive learning for our edifi-
l where there is no one to catch
h him down; and, if so, the reader
l he shall have all the benefit we can
f it.

hope and trust," exclaimed Esther,
at, the spasm having gone off, and
or recommence his chicken-bone—
w! he has not been taken ill. It is
do think, to be taken ill on a journey,
e place. I remember—once—"

looked up from his plate.—It was
anxiously watching a still nervous
the Vicar's lips—and Esther Lawton

ly, now I think of it," said the Vicar,
bert may have gone round, and taken
his way."

't wonder, then!" agreed Esther, sud-
ned, and evidently much relieved.

ntinued the Vicar, "we shall hear how
friend Peter Worthington is."

be getting on a-pace?" observed the
Nice berth that of Linwood."

eighty," said the Vicar, "if he's a day.

But Chatfield's so active—the duty must be very light for him now."

"I did hear a day or two ago, or I dreamt it," said the Doctor, his eyes engaged on his plate, "he had had another fit, and was confined to his bed."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Vicar.

"May have been only a rumour," added Dunlop.

"I think it by no means unlikely," replied the Vicar, musing.

"I can't think how they can call Linwood pretty," observed Esther.

"Not to be compared with Marksbury," agreed Clermont.

"I was only alluding to it for it's living," explained Dunlop.

"I'll warrant, you shall take me fifty miles," said Aunt Gertrude, "any way you please round Marksbury; and you will not show me such a 'Cuyp,' now, as I can show you within ten minutes' walk of this old house."

"Probably not," acquiesced the Vicar.

"Linwood—'Cuyp,' indeed!" exclaimed Clermont. "A dull, tame flat of bog land for five miles round, and no better."

"Well, I do think," sided Esther, "it would almost break my heart, and that's true, to leave dear Marksbury."

eak mine outright—not almost," said

—what say you, Annie?" asked the

should love the place best," replied
moment's thought, and being re-
ok from Aunt Gerty, "which would
piest."

plauded the Doctor, while Clermont
if he did not say, as much.

— happiness!" repeated the Vicar.
ehold word is that! yet, how many
o of it know its proper taste? On
l, yet, how few relish it aright!
n use of it—by the universality of its
e and all—high and low—rich and
and ignorant—good and bad,—one
was within reach of some;—yet, who
heart on earth can say it has safely
l with truth?"

replied Clermont, modestly raising his
ar's as he spoke.

ka! found it, have you, Clermont?"
Vicar. "I wish you joy, my boy!
generous—where—where?—tell us."

CONTENT, if anywhere," said Cler-
there, I suppose, alone."

thing now, though, must have turned up money—something to cleanse the Thames, and send the water, clear as crystal, into all their cisterns five miles round Middlesex; there's for you!"

"But about the fire," wanted to know Aunt Gertrude.

"Well, when Dick's got a moment to spare, down he goes into his laboratory—poor Mrs. G. calls it the infernal regions—but that's her ignorance. Well down he goes—and there's Dick, up to his neck in blow-pipes, and retorts, and receivers—lost to the world,—till, wanted, or starving, up he rises again to mother earth—black and bleared as any—"

"Yes, yes," said Aunt Gertrude, "and—at it again as usual—set the house on fire—wasn't it?"

"It was—yes—just so—that was it."

"There's a visitation!" exclaimed Esther. "It's a lesson!"

"To all—it is," responded Dunlop.

"To stick to the main chance? yes," agreed the Vicar. "But what has that to do, exactly, with the question?"

"This—don't you think?" replied Esther, taking courage from the Doctor's look; "this—if Richard Grogram *had* stuck to the main chance—don't you think so, Dunlop?"

"What?"

"That it has—and a great deal—to do with it!"

a good deal—that's true—" admitted
to be said—on both sides."
t quite satisfied with the answer, Esther
letermined to make the most of it.
deal? yes, I should think so," said she.
Doctor Dunlop—wasn't he?—grum-
y—because his brother, Grogram, had a
s large as his own—and a couple more
ore his door,—now see!"
," acknowledged the Doctor, raising his
iling.
now!" continued Esther, seeing that
ained silent, as if listening, and address-
or, whose eyes still wandered heaven-
be bound, now, you'll be loving your
though there isn't yet a Mrs. D.—and
ews—yes—and be prouder of them to-
than ever you were in your life. Now,
d tell me truly, won't you?"
ends," said the Doctor, letting fall his
Aunt Gertrude, opposite him.
?—on what?" asked Aunty, slightly
d smoothing down her apron.
?—Well, then—on—whether you'll all
bye—and see the brace of—" began

that all?" laughed Annie. "Don't
all know them by heart already?"

"Patience, if you please, Miss;—the brace of cucumbers—if you please—that I've left on their stalks—on purpose to take the shine out of Master Humphrey—patience, Miss!

"That reminds me," said the Vicar, rising, and calling Humphrey, who was going across the lawn with some roots in his hand, to the window. "Stay—that's a good thought—must get the loose box ready," and, stepping out, disappeared with him among the shrubs.

"I hope poor Richard Grogram was insured," said Esther, following the Doctor to the door as he took his hat—he, the Doctor, having first bound Aunt Gertrude down by a faithful promise, that she would come, after luncheon, with Annie and Clermont, and judge with their own eyes, whether he hadn't, for once, fairly taken the shine out of Master Humphrey.

"Insured? Dick Grogram insured?" repeated the Doctor. "Dick insure aught but his own ruin? Poor Dick!—oh, no!"

"My heart aches to think what they'll ever do," sighed Esther. "I knew a case once—it just puts me in mind of it—that happened in Laureldale—my native place you know. It was one Sunday evening—just as we were coming from church—all of a moment—"

We are ever doomed, when Esther has a story pat,

nts. Just as if for once things
fortunately,—scarcely had the first
tory, that we feel sure would have
der's feeling exceedingly, fallen from
lips, when up came the Doctor's boy,
th, with his piebald pony trotting at
e was not a moment to be lost.
Birch had sent twice. Here were
case—which should give place?
omforts, you know, for poor Phœbe,"
fter the Doctor, as he rode away;
se?"
cried Dunlop, waving his hand;
nind them of *that*. The way to the
tty well known, without Dan Dunlop
and, striking off into a hand-gallop,
hours before Phœbe Birch—though
nded in them—had the gratification
all sides, that her little Benjamin—
ctor said, and if he wasn't a judge
the greatest beauty glad mother's
lessed withal.
—*eureka*—'tis found!" said Aunt
ving Annie up-stairs for their bon-
do some shopping. "And we are
happy with our 'Cuyp,' as happy can
rmont? What a blessing!"
provided always—" returned Cler-

"Always a something. We won't hear anything of the sort," said Annie.

"Provided — what, pray, Mr. Lawyer?" asked Aunty, looking down over the banister.

"That we—not only have found,—but shall keep it, when we've got it," replied Clermont.

"Ah! only show us how to do that," responded Aunt Gerty, "and you will be, indeed, a conjuror my dear Clermont."

But it is time that the anxious reader who is feeling as impatient about my Lord Fitzherbert's non-arrival at the Parsonage as Esther Lawton should be put out of suspense. And he or she will be so to a great extent, by kindly jogging on with us to the next chapter.

"But, first—how is it?" we hear it asked "that no allusion has been made by any of the vicarage party to the visit of old Mabel and her cuckoo song—a visit, not likely, one would have thought, by all appearances, to have been forgotten by two, at least, of that loving little circle. Had Clermont, then, lost sight of those dark, searching looks—that forefinger raised so imperatively—and those wild, weird tones that struck like icicles to his heart? Or had Annie entirely banished from her memory Clermont's unusually clouded brow, and pensive look, and abstracted manner, so unlike his usual wont, all that evening? Or Aunt Gertrude s

all those beautiful bright promises
band—alas for poor Dan Dunlop!—
ner precious gifts in store for her?
s all, with one exception at least, as
y, as when the old hag, her doleful
ed her skinny hand as if in triumph
But there seemed to be no wish on
her Annie, or Clermont, for some
est known to themselves, to recur to
therefore, why should we?
me thoughts—especially with certain
nd, and sensitive hearts — which,
ging ardently for sympathy, find no
wherein to pour themselves; and
nkling in the bosom, and, like the
mysterious words—

the poor bird will tell thee best,
urning the loss of his rifled nest,
her he comes to enjoy his rest,
is cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo,"

d deeper, and sadder and sadder,
effort to control their ravages;
want only of one drop of the sweet,
acious balm of mutual confidence.
r and deeper sink they; till, either
ed—and the spell is over; or they
er—when the heart is broken.

CHAPTER XIII.

AUTHOR AND ARTIST.

MANY times as Cecil Fitzherbert, escaping fro
the enervating pursuits of luxury and dissipatio
had hailed with grateful pleasure the fresh blow fro
the green fields, and felt, noble Lord as he was, a
at liberty to inhale heaven's pure breath as often
he pleased, what sovereign virtue there was in bl
skies, sweet air, and separation for awhile from t
teeming haunts of men and marts, to impart ne
life to the soul, chase the clouds from the troubl
brow, and fill the heart with nobler and bett
purposes; never, perhaps, in his life had he felt
sensible of the delights of the glorious landscape
nature's own unrivalled handiwork, and all the spi
stirring influences it disclosed at every turn, as whe
some ten miles from the metropolis, and the fi
stunning effects of the consciousness of the loss

having passed off, he roused himself
n the lethargy into which he seemed
from the moment he left Nugent
and, bending forward to let the balmy
his fevered temples—"there was
that," said he, and, taking a couple
om his waistcoat-pocket, amused him-
two woolly-headed young urchins at
him; till, fairly done up, he threw
r forward as he could out of window,
e of seeing them have another race,
ver heels after them in the dust.

ll at ease, it is astonishing what little
d amusement. The culprit, awaiting
t is to consign him to the scaffold,
know, with apparent anxious interest,
ly crawling up the wall, and wonder
induce him to weave his web among
hrewd practitioner as he is, what
ld ever hope to get by them? Then,
y, it is the oddest thing in the world to
dge *will* wear his wig awry. But, all
, in truth, is staring him in the face?
all-absorbing thought—the gallows!
ig, nor spider, nor anything else have
to drive one moment from his brain.
herbert—though it may be rather
couple his name with the Jew

"Fagan," or "Bill Sykes"—tossed sixpences into t
dust for the young urchins, trying to cheat hims
into the belief that his thoughts were anywhe
rather than on the roll of bank notes, his mothe
parting present; and which had she known how
had disposed of, would have sent a dagger to h
heart, that, selfish and iron-willed as he was, he wou
rather, certainly, have avoided planting there, h
there been an option.

The fate of the sixpences being decided, Ce
Fitzherbert took to gazing, half admiringly, and h
wonderingly, on the various smiling landscapes
he galloped past them. He could scarcely beli
that anythings so common-place as blue skies, a
verdant hills and dales, green meadows, tower
trees, and blooming hedgerows, had the power to m
him feel so much more light-hearted than when
left St. James's Street. At another time, as obje
of themselves, he would have scarcely given them
passing notice. He had seen, and thought of the
and felt, too, in poetry, about them a thousand tir
before; but, somehow, he did not remember that
had ever viewed them with the same eye, or felt
them with the same feelings as he did then.
could not account for it. The idea of Cha
Ferrers, and the cards, and the champagne, w
disgusting! So, lighting a cigar, Cecil Fitzherb
was determined to do his best to bury it in oblivi

r gamble more. When he lost that
ven hundred, which his mother paid
Houghton Palmer, he had promised
uld be the last. If she knew what
Sackville Street—and he had half a
Nugent Harvey—what should have
nxious to get the money through
his mother knowing it?—she would
m!" and, again dropping into deep
editatively puffed away; till seized,
sudden resolution, he drew forth
east pocket the gold-clasped morocco
which he had deposited his mother's
g taken from its recesses the solitary
en pounds therein reposing, for a
fixedly rivetting his eyes on the post-
he kept turning and twisting the
veen his thumbs and fingers, this way
suddenly leaning forward to see that
ar—with a sharp jerk of the left hand
far as he could behind him out of
throwing himself back again in his
ch for that!" said he, to himself;
ow—past recovery, by Jove!—and
I havn't either."

r did not draw well. Having lighted
rew better, Cecil Fitzherbert continued
falling off into a dose, he slept soundly

for more than an hour. Waking much refreshed
his nap, he stared about him; till, the fields a
hedges growing familiar, he tumbled a handful
letters which he took from a small Russia-leath
case beside him into his lap, and accompanying t
perusal of some, and the tearing up and scatteri
to the winds of the fragments of others with an
from Rossini, managed to kill time pretty well, t
rattling up to "The White Hart," all further fears
dark visions of pistols, poignards, and prussic ac
which had passed in horrible succession before
Lordship's perturbed imagination during the f
half hour of his ride, were at an end; and, follow
his honoured host and hostess into the coffee,
common-room, into which his Lordship desired
be shewn—nothing remained but for him to dec
whether he would go on that evening, or,
The Telegraph had passed through long ago, m
a night of it at Braybrook; and, if so, what
Lordship would be pleased to order for his dinner

"Was there no other coach that day to Cop
denne?"

"No other. But my Lord could have horses
immediately if he wished."

"My Lord would see,"—begged the gentleman
rather faded suit, and with a poetical expression
countenance, who was arranging some drawings,
parently, spread on a side table, and who seemed rat

ch unusual commotion, not in any way himself, as our neighbours say; which, entleman at his ease,—"no, his Lordship a note or two for the post, while dinner ; and thought now, he should not go enne till the next day. What could he er?"

could have anything—everything."

ng—anything would be enough."

roast chicken—some cutlets and green omelette please my Lord?"

ly well!"

my Lord was fond of a glass of old had been twice to the Inges; or a nome-brewed, such as there wasn't in e—his Lordship might go further and an at 'The White Hart.'"

was "fond of anything and every- as good, and doubted not he had come nouse for it."

opperbolt was overwhelmed! Had the on of his Lordship's judgment; and, napkin gleefully under his arm, David, of Sally Crumps acting as his own hurried forthwith on his busy errand he "White Hart" worthy of the dis- ame it was henceforth to enjoy in the gland.

David Chopperbolt withdrawn, the poetical-faced gentleman in the old favourites became again a little uncomfortable; seeing which, with perfect breeding Lord Fitzherbert advanced towards the table at which he was sitting, and, observing him putting the finishing touches to a landscape-sketch, no doubt the produce of his morning's ramble, asked if he might have the pleasure of looking at it?—which request being instantly granted, an animated conversation on the present state of the arts and of literature, as connected with them—the owner of the old favourites, Walter Pemberton, being both artist and author in one, Heaven help him!—immediately ensued; and perhaps never did the half hour before dinner seem to pass so quickly, so instructively, so delightfully, as that half-hour seemed to Cecil Fitzherbert to fly away in pleasant converse with the intelligent author-artist, Walter Pemberton, Esq., so that when David Chopperbolt, followed by Sally, appeared, bearing in course the first, Cecil could have found it in his heart to "punch David's thick head," for breaking in on a discourse which, hungry as he was, he would have gone without dinner altogether, to have felt himself as competent to appreciate as he thought he was supposed to be.

"You have dined, you say?" said Lord Fitzherbert, taking the chair at the dinner-table placed for him by his host.

d," replied Walter Pemberton, in-
ing on with the finishing touches,
o make the most of the remaining
hours—and had my tea—and supper,
atters cost me neither much coin nor
assure you."

onder at your being so proud of your
d Fitzherbert, pouring the melted
peas.

ed Pemberton.

o had made the observation at ran-
ny precise reason for so doing, and
moment while he tossed off a glass
Why?—because the admirers are the
admired but the few," replied he.
!"

be something more than the love of
replied Pemberton, "though that is
make the head and the heart ache
do over the easel and the writing-

heartfelt, inextinguishable love no
d Lord Fitzherbert "for the art

esponded Pemberton, "nothing else
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"You have dined, you say?" said Lord Fitzherbert, taking the chair at the dinner-table placed for him by his host.

"Yes, indeed," replied Walter Pemberton, industriously going on with the finishing touches, as if anxious to make the most of the remaining light—"many hours—and had my tea—and supper, too. Those matters cost me neither much coin nor consideration, I assure you."

"I don't wonder at your being so proud of your art," said Lord Fitzherbert, pouring the melted butter over his peas.

"Why?" asked Pemberton.

His Lordship had made the observation at random, without any precise reason for so doing, and had to think a moment while he tossed off a glass of Madeira. "Why?—because the admirers are the many, and the admired but the few," replied he. "Fame is sweet!"

"There must be something more than the love of fame, I fancy," replied Pemberton, "though that is very sweet—to make the head and the heart ache as often as they do over the easel and the writing-desk."

"An innate, heartfelt, inextinguishable love no doubt," rejoined Lord Fitzherbert "for the art itself?"

"Yes, yes," responded Pemberton, "nothing else would ever buy it at the price that must be paid for it, too often."

"You will do me the favour," requested Lord

Fitzherbert, filling a glass with the Madeira from the "Inges," which David handed on a massive silver waiter only used on state occasions, "to give me your opinion of Master Chopperbolt's yellow seal—really not bad—should make 'The White Hart famous."

"Thank your Lordship!" acknowledged David greatly flattered. "And so it had. It was a favourite wine of Mr. Grabbs."

"Grabbs—Grabbs," repeated his Lordship, helping himself to a cutlet; "who's he?"

"Probably, my Lord was a stranger at Braybrook though every one thereabouts had had the honour o hearing of my Lord Fitzherbert, of Castlemore Possibly, my Lord was not aware that Mr. Grabbs was the junior partner of the respectable firm of Wheedl and Grabbs, of that town, attorneys-at-law. No better judge of a glass of Madeira, 'twixt that and London, than Josiah Grabbs."

"Indeed—hem—ha!"—His Lordship would take some cheese and radishes with the home brewed.

"I have often thought," resumed Lord Fitzherbert, addressing Pemberton, who pronounced the Madeira very good, as far as he could judge; "I have often thought that you must, in the pursuit o your art, know many more delights than other men."

"It has its pleasures, and many; and so it need have," replied Pemberton.

think we, the English, as a people,"
Fitzherbert, "are, really, true lovers of

pinion, with the great majority among
l Pemberton, "they are more loved,
understood. Fancy what we may,
t we will—our's never was, and
e the land of painting, poesy, or

you say we love them?"
we are taught that we ought to love
sidered by others, better judges than
ellent and precious in them. We *see*
most of us; but do not *feel* them—
, artistically, appreciatingly feel them."
," observed Lord Fitzherbert, "see
rices we give for the old masters."
," replied Pemberton, "because only—
nd for little more; and because others
them, if we do not."
ges to come, do you think that our
dern artists and authors will be prized
ks as highly as the old masters are at
ed by ourselves?"
"
ask!"
course, will depend on the taste and
times."

"Where?" asked Lord Fitzherbert, "are the Raphaels, the Correggios, Vandykes, Claudes, and Rubens, Teniers, and Titians of these our days; or our Cuyps, and Gainboroughs, and Wilkies, now; and, in literature, our Shakspeares, Miltons, Addisons, Goldsmiths, Popes, and Cowpers?"

"An illustrious list, truly," accorded Pemberton, with a sigh—feeling the difficulty, as he marshalled before his mind's eye the most illustrious names of his own age, to supply their places, now or hereafter, to his satisfaction.

"Think you, if the same works," continued Cecil Fitzherbert, "as now load our walls and book-shelves from the pencils and pens of the old masters, were to issue from the easel and the press of these our days, they would be esteemed as highly by future ages as they are now by us?"

"Upon my word, I rather doubt whether many of them would," replied Pemberton; "especially some of the old master-pieces in literature. Authors, far more than artists, find need to adapt themselves to the tone and spirit of their times. The public taste in literature has undergone a great and lasting change, by all appearances, within the last half-century. Go only to Covent Garden, or Old Drury, and, in mere theatricals, which always had, and will have, powerful fascinations

on—see what radical changes modern
s."

it a sign of—degeneracy?"

not. On the contrary. In one sense,
y we are no gainers; but in the
lightenment, and common sense, and
ecency, I take it, we are immeasurably

will apply, as a rule, I suppose, to
ents of modern literature."

rule, I think it may. To the arts it
very minor degree; though they have
from much that was scandalous by
s, no doubt."

se, what might pass under covers in
scarcely raising a blush, even at the
would often be condemned as infamous
table on the canvas."

ot of it. If all that issues from the
in these our moral times, could bear
well as nine-tenths that issues from
thorship would hold the rank it ought
nation of the world; but, while it is
ehicle of so much that is harmful as
llent—while good folks often fear as
it,—no wonder at publishers buttoning
kets, and authors—so many of them—
ttle better than a name."

"You are both author and artist," smiled Lord Fitzherbert; "or would get more 'kicks than ha'pence,' I expect, for such impertinence."

"O, as to that," laughed Pemberton, "I must take my share; no more, I dare say, than I deserve."

"Talking of modern tastes in literature," said Lord Fitzherbert,—"how is it, so many of our best writers keep up the run so devotedly on low life? Nothing seems to go down so relishingly as the sayings and doings of Smith, Snooks, and Co.?"

"Perhaps, because Smith, Snooks, and Co," hazarded Walter Pemberton, "are such *picturesque* gents."

"That must be it, I suppose," smiled Lord Fitzherbert. "My Lord and my Lady have no heads on their shoulders nor hearts in their breasts, as they used to have, may be. May Fair is not near so fertile in the picturesque as Barbican and Clerkenwell. We haristocrats ain't worth a pencil point."

"Well, the run on Snooks and Co. *has*, perhaps been rather excessive of late," admitted Pemberton. "Possibly, when my Lord and my Lady are not quite such a *genus per se*, a little less exclusive, rather more Christian-like, and accessible, and hospitable, and agreeable as my Lord Fitzherbert, — our great guns may give them another turn, and fire away again broadsides for them,—who can tell?"

"If there were anything gained, by for eve

ame changes—knocking everlastingly
but Smith and Snooks," fired up
rt, warming with the wine,—"there
reason in it; but to be jog-trotting,
obbing, through three mortal volumes,
but snobs and snobbery—great and
y—snobbery — snobbery! as if there
right, brave, and beautiful in human
Snooks and Co.; showing her up
darkest forms; lashing her vices a
assiduously than asserting and uphold-
s; revelling in little but the same
ures of ruffianism and rascality—tit-
doubt for your rabid palates,—but of
ooks and Co., reform them as you
tbe models, it passes my humble
onceive what we want to know more
e have the pride and happiness to
"

ple prefer the sayings and doings of
hed up for them naturally and plea-
others," replied Pemberton; "and will
—and there's the secret—by the thou-
blame those who cater for them?"
studying oneself isn't the best model
r improvement?"
that goes," replied Pemberton—"I

mean the model for imitation,—I'm not sure but it may be best looked for among models of its own class."

"Yes, that may be, so far," assented Lord Fitzherbert; "but I can see no possible objection to the parson's wife here—because she has got her own cookery-book that came down to her from her great-grandmother, and prizes it, next her Bible, above all the learning on the Vicar's shelves,—looking sometimes into Alexis Soyer for a notion, when she wants one."

"Nor I," admitted Pemberton; "provided always —that, with her sauces and side-dishes, she does not lose her poor brain, and bring herself and the Vicar to the workhouse."

"Nor see I the slightest reason to doubt," smiled Cecil Fitzherbert, rising, and peeping delighted over Walter Pemberton's shoulder at the *chef-d'œuvre* just finished; "but that our modern *Gainsborough* here will fetch one of these fine days just as fabulous a sum as any '*undoubted original*' ever knocked down by Master Christie, for—how much, then shall we say?"

"Ah!" smiled Pemberton, cheerfully tying up his portfolio, and taking his hat for an evening stroll; "wonderful things do happen—there's no denying it. There certainly, is this hope—seeing what they

for an old cracked saucer and an
nose off—the '*Pemberton*' may go
price—mayn't it—one of these fine
ldn't wonder in the least—they are
ur *cognoscenti* of old rubbish."

rd Fitzherbert paced the room from
l, having nothing else to amuse him
s were brought and he could write
to taking a critical survey of his
lternately stopping to examine more
as the declining light would permit,
raits of his worthy host and hostess,
s looks at each other on either side
and then, more narrowly to inspect an
lar on the sideboard, the rim of the
f which had been chipped off some
ack—and wondering in whose reign it
have been fashioned—and what was
od of it without anything in it but

arlour of 'The White Hart,' at Bray-
l but little from most other country
f its class. It was a sort of oblong-
with two windows, a low, huge-beamed
ple Dutch-tiled fire-place, and gorgeous
s artfully representing, at a glance, a
-hunt somewhere on the other side of
; in which frantic elephants, frantic

tigers, red Indians, reckless Amazons in scarlet kilts, and civil and military officers in bran new cocked hats and full-dress uniforms, rushing headlong to the fray, were graphically commingled. Then, there were the loving counterparts of our host and hostess, as we have seen, bidding you welcome whichever way you looked; a life-sized bronzed plaster bust of Lord Nelson on a bracket between the windows; and a prize ox in oil, in an ebony frame opposite; an old faded turkey carpet and rug, comfortable enough in their way; what once had been a pair of crimson moreen curtains to each window with black-velvet bindings and ball fringes; the usual complement of black, straight-backed, horse-hair-bottomed chairs, ball-toed tables, and pot-bellied sideboards, and resplendent cupboard in the corner finished off by a tastefully bordered-apron of crimped shavings in the fire-place—and which last seemed wonderfully to interest his Lordship, who had several times, as he approached it from the other end of the room, endeavoured, but in vain, to make out how they could possibly curl and twist the wood into such whimsical devices;—till, Master Chopperbolt entering with candles, down sat his Lordship to his writing, and, taking the note he had written to Bella Gordon at Nugent Harvey's from his breast pocket, he took open the envelope, and, running his eye over it—dipped his pen in the ink, and, on a fresh sheet of paper, scribbled off as follows:—

ng Bella,
ime to thank you as you deserved,
: longed, for your sweet pretty little
e and affection that I have had close
e, and which has imparted the only
h it has felt since I tore myself away
n *you* say as much for *me*, and the
ature? Yes, I think I hear you say,
ll, I suppose I must believe you if I
y sleep to-night. You must not cry
will spoil your eyes, mind that!—and
arvey up. I quite agree with you
But I know your discrimination and
have no fears. Above all, don't
o be jealous again—that would kill me!
mind Sam brings the flower-patterns
ton; and the double snaffle, too, from
Comfort my dear mother for me.
so like yourself. I could blub like a
gave way; but that wouldn't do very
e Ferrers looking on and chaffing me.
hear him! So, pressing you to my
ll; and with * * * * * * all these
lf, believe me ever,

"Your affectionate,

"C. F."

t."

"Braybrook.

"P.S.—I have opened my letter, darling Bella, to add a word, and a precious sad word it is! I do think I am the unluckiest dog—save and except in the possession of the little treasure I value more than all the wealth on earth!—you know, don't you, what that is? Would you believe it—it's enough to drive me mad!—I've lost, somehow, the little blue morocco pocket-book, your last birth-day present—which vexes me more than all the rest put together—and every farthing my dear, generous mother gave me to put in it before I left. There's a job! I fear it's useless to hope ever to see it again. Does my mother know the numbers of the notes? I dare say not—she never troubles her head about pre cautions in money-matters—and that's a pity. By the bye—tell her, I've got the quinine and opodeldoc all right, and am sure shall find the new flannel a treasure. Do, there's a dear good girl! break it to my mother about the money. I really havn't pluck enough to do it myself. And I will write to her in a day or two. You'll do it, won't you Bella dear, for me? Yes, that I know you will. I shall have plenty to land me, I think, all safe at Marksbury. Am now at this confounded inn, the 'White Hart;' but get on to-morrow—as I was too late for *The Telegraph*—and, D.V., as old Vaughan

far-famed Annie Lawton before I
t. Depend on the Daguerreotype.
to see your welcome hand-writing,
ay, when Sam comes; and with a
my heart, and that's true!—good-
st! and ever believe me, as you

"Toujours à vous,
"C. F."

9 o'clock."

t, having directed and sealed the
; and, desiring it might go by the
n, again sat down, and, seemingly
ind, filled sheetful after sheetful to
riends; till, fairly tired, he ordered
his agreeable fellow-traveller, the
l return, and renew their chat over
dish of buttered toast. But
, having long since sought an
weetly welcome by the labours of
ship soon desired to be shown to
, laying his head, nodding with
f mind than of body, upon his
y, too; but whether to awake with
nages at his heart, and the same
ol on his lips as the author-artist,
mself.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEEING'S BELIEVING.

WAKING after a long and sound night's res
Cecil Fitzherbert stared bewildered for a momer
or two around him, not feeling quite clear as t
where he really was. It certainly was not his ow
elegant, well-appointed bed-room in Hill-Street, nc
bore the slightest resemblance, either, to his "snug
gery," as he called it, at The Villa, nor to th
bower-chamber he always occupied when he wer
shooting at Castlemore. Cecil Fitzherbert rubbe
his eyes; turned a glance first on the scanty whit
dimity bed-curtains; then on the vicious paper o
the walls, all red, and blue, and brimstone; the
on two particularly spiteful-looking earthenwar
eagles, making horrid faces at each other on th
mantel-piece; and, the mists clearing off gradual
from his brain, his Lordship began to entertai

nception as to his whereabouts, and
that he was, in fact, in the best
his host of 'The White Hart,'
airy room enough, and only want-
sana in corpore sano, to be all that
desire—with a few less draughts,
nket or two in cold weather—wherein
wearied frame, and be all right and
ning for a substantial breakfast.
his watch, and finding it already
il Fitzherbert leaped from his bed,
Lord, he knew perfectly well, and
n the use of his limbs; and having
nit he preferred to make his *début*
the Vicarage—a plain dark Scotch
texture, which became him exceed-
s soon dressed; when, throwing open
v that looked over the gardens and
host's little domain, there seemed to
bbub and to-do going on among the
l retainers of Master Chopperbolt in
eath, headed, apparently, and encouraged
self, and Ephraim Jowls, the exciseman,

ng to a traveller in country-quarters
amusement, and, of all things in the
liked to be amused; his Lordship,
the finishing touches to his toilet,

descended to the parlour, where meeting David, a
he was pleased to be called by his patrons, hur
rying along the passage—"what's the matter?"
asked his Lordship.

"The best bit of fun ever my Lord saw in hi
life," giggled David. "Hoped his Lordship ha
slept well. It was the room the High Sheri
himself occupied once when at Braybrook on th
election-business for his brother the Colonel; an
Mr. Grabbs always occupied, before he settled fo
good in their parts. My Lord would take tea—
not coffee?—And eggs—and broiled chicken an
ham?—Ready in twenty minutes. If his Lordshi
would like to see how they cotched a thief, i
wouldn't spoil his Lordship's appetite for his break
fast a bit—just to step out, and have a breath, firs
of the sweet-briars and honeysuckles."

"His Lordship would like amazingly to see th
thief caught. Was there much robbery going o
about Braybrook?"

"At times a smart sprinkling. Mr. Grabbs ha
done a good deal. But—though it wasn't for him
David Chopperbolt, to speak—there were som
other folks about Braybrook—proud and pig-headed
come to that—besides the country Justices."

"But," suggested his Lordship—"wouldn't th
thief be getting off, if they weren't sharp about it?"

"Hang un! yes—my Lord was right. But hi

l understand, it wasn't no thief in
not it, that had been prigging the
ody knew how—the last ten days;
s hawk—only think of it—and there
a-hanging about over the pea-field
grab another of 'em, as sure as fate
ok sharp."
us lose another moment, then," ad-
ship; and, following the leader, he
lf to be ensconced snugly within
fragrant shrubs, where, without in-
ld be an eye and ear-witness of all
ile he enjoyed "a mild W," before
in perfection. And now ensued an
enough among the thief-catchers—
ether, in sober truth, there was any
tched,"—and then, what measures
n to bag him at all risks.
s—there!" whispered Ephraim Jowls,
holding a blunderbuss in his left
ecting Mrs. Jemima Chopperbolt's
his right fore-finger to some object
the corner of the pea-field; which,
ment being hidden by a clump of
ich it disappeared, wanted Ephraim's
make out, at all to Jemima's satis-
it was. "There—there—now don't

Jemima Chopperbolt, shading her brow with he left arm, "could see nothing but the oaks, and Luk Whitehead's windmill in the distance."

"Well, of all the hextraordinary things!" sai Ephraim. "There he is again—and the poute not fifty yards off, as I'm a sinner!"

"No, Jemima couldn't see nothing, and it w no use to say she could. Where was Betsy?"

Out came Betsy at the call, evidently from t pastry-board, her sleeves tucked up above her elbo and her dappled arms frosted all over with flou dust, followed by Tommy, from his music studi learning the fiddle in the back washhouse.

"Law!—now—you don't mean to say you ca see him now?" persisted Ephraim, turning a appealing to 'boots,' and Sally, and a knot of idl staring their eyes out.

"In course, they could—as plain as the nose Master Ephraim's face."

At any other time, the allusion might have be unfortunate — Ephraim Jowls' nose, like Jemi Chopperbolt's, standing no insinuations. But Ephrai wanted no better confirmation of his point; an waiting for no further parley, slipped away, an creeping gently along as if he trod on eggs, took circumbendibus, so as, if possible, to outflank t enemy; and reaching, undiscovered, to close und his quarters—down he squatted, to await with wh

ght the preconcerted signal from
hen he was to fire; "and leave alone
" he said, "for bringing down his

you see, Miss?" said "boots," under
pointing to the spot where Jowls had
lor love 'ee!—look there, then."
ore than I can," cried Jemima. "Now,
?"
was that the sun was too dazzling, or
pperbolt was out of temper at having
with her hair in papers, her face all of
r hands and arms all in that pickle, in
d—a real, live Lord, too—we scarcely
tsy Chopperbolt could see nothing, any
r mother; and, so declaring, bounced
her morning duties.
all fudge!" cried Jemima, removing her
er eyebrows. "Tell me! It's another
thief than that, I'll warrant, knows
outers go."
said David—"not believe the hevidence
senses? What am I to believe then—I
o know that?"
hat's 'boots,' no doubt," said Jemima,
of the head—"anybody can see that—
peas in the field yonder—and that's
—anybody can see that, and more shame

to him—a-idling away his time, his precious da there, a-playing the fiddle!—let me catch that fid —instead of minding of his books—from morni till night—an idle good-for-nothing! Let me cat that fiddle—won't I smash it, if he don't mind summing, as sure as I'm his mother? Couldn't have got a place at Wheedle and Grabb's, only l week, if he'd knowed his sums?—it's what he'll ha to answer for—and so will his father. And tha you, David Chopperbolt—in course I can see th can't I?—and that you're both making fools of all—that I can see, too, can't I—plain as the n on my face?"

This, seeing the 'nose on your face,' is an expressi very commonly made use of, without any very defin or intelligible meaning—seeing, that some, witho much more than an excuse for a nose at all, empl it indiscriminately. In Jemima Chopperbolt's c the identity was palpable enough, for it was bar possible for Jemima to cast her eyes in any directi without being reminded, if not precisely of t plainness, most unquestionably of the manifest se evidence of the object in view. Jemima Chopperbol nose was decidedly not Roman, nor exactly Grecia nor aquiline, nor pug, nor bottle. It was intende maybe, for one or the other; but whether natu altered her mind in the process, got confused, or h a mind for a freak, there is no telling.

r, rather, nasal promontory, was
te—out of all order—a curious
; all ordinary rules of line and
s this peculiarity in it, too—that,
opperbolt's nose, or, rather, three
he root upwards was of Lavater's
e apex or point—for it was very
a's nose—was as red as a May-
say you could have lighted a
might savour of exaggeration;
ould have kindled his pipe by the
, what wonder if a match would
he tip of Jemima's nose?
g characteristic and commanding,
d generous-looking in a jolly-red
s our kindly inferences. But
jolly, nor joyous, nor generous in
t's red nose. It was too pointed,
nfort in it—no conviviality—no
stood alone—out—apart from
ving no relationship or sympathy
s neighbourhood. You felt, that
too near it, you might be burnt,
warmed. It did not look like a
reciate the bouquet of Delcroix's
nel's old cork. In short, it looked
nothing but what was nasty, and
ustibus non dis.—Jemima Chop-

perbolt knew the smell of "blue ruin," we exp
fastidious reader, better perhaps than you;
nasty, indeed, as you may please to call "dog's no
or "gin and bitters"—it is not everybody who is gi
with such susceptible organization as you and
or, maybe—there's no knowing—we should h
much jollier noses than we've got.

"Well I never!" exclaimed David, looking strai
at Jemima's nose as he was invited to do,—"t
does beat anything, then, I ever did see in my li
Now, there's Tommy, there—you'll own, may
that's Tommy. Perhaps you'll say Tommy did
see, neither."

Tommy, thus lugged out, and left with no exc
for preferring to take neither side—in spite of
danger his fiddle was in—felt bound to admit, he
see something; but what it was—or whether it w
anything—he couldn't, and he wouldn't—and that w
flat—take upon himself positively to declare. Fat
might have thought he saw the hawk, becau
he had been dreaming about him—mightn't he?

"Dreaming!" cried David.

"Yes, dreaming!" echoed Jemima. "Seein
believing. Can't see it—won't believe it—so, tha
flat!"

Now, Jemima Chopperbolt, besides having a ve
uncompanionable nose—true, she had much to t
her, what with Chopperbolt's reputed gallantri

ous! and Tommy taking, seem-
kindly but his fiddle and father's
incredulous and perverse person.
ief, when required to credit any-
sphere of her own positive
remely provoking, and often the
ngry words between herself and
o such a pitch did she go some-
had been heard by 'boots,' more
ld Sally, and Sally somebody else
ming to himself, when terribly
t infamous, unmatrimonial air,
print; and "boots" declares he
s once—in high key, too—and
os—

My wife's dead:
here let her lie;
he's at rest—
nd so am I."

t, too, she says, sincerely!" but
by any means that we should.
is, nothing—though David were
ne fact of it on his Bible oath—
na Chopperbolt credit what she
g's believing," she said. "Can't
-that's flat!"
the counterpart of his father, so

was Betsy the very image of her mother. Th
must both of them have ocular demonstration,
they wouldn't believe nothing—that was fla
"Was there a horrible murder within any comeatal
distance—though in every mouth—nay, though t
coroner were sitting on it—Jemima Chopperbolt mu
see the corpse. Seeing's believing," she insist
And it certainly must be acknowledged, that it wo
be as well, in one sense, if people generally relied
this "oudacious lying world," as Jemima called
for what they take for gospel, on their eyes a li
more, "poor deluded critturs!" than their ears.
was just as useless to try to turn Jemima Chopp
bolt's carrotty locks into auburn, as she fon
termed them, or to give her an eye for the subli
and beautiful, or an ear for music and Tomm
melodies,—as to hope to persuade her that a bl
man could credit the fact of his blindness, if he h
not the power of seeing it in the glass.

But Lord Fitzherbert has nearly finished
mild W., and we must catch the thief, or his Lo
ship will be getting impatient for his breakfast.

"I tell you, seeing's believing," cried Jemi
sticking her arms a-kimbo,—"don't see—wo
believe—that's flat!"—and, turning on her heel, a
with "sparks of fury flashing from her eyes,"
was Jemima bouncing, to dish-up his Lordshi
breakfast—when, bang!—bang!—went barrel af

underbuss,—and "thunder and
David, running towards the
then—I'm blessed if he havn't
two pouters!"

l. To the eternal shame of that
shot, Ephraim Jowls—there lay
d of the thief, two of Jemima's
es! Heavens, what a scene!
ed and dumbfounded stood Je-
t, with her hands convulsively
across her bosom, as she gazed
peechless rage and mortification
ate pets—that were the pride of
lmiration and envy of all her
which, but an hour before, were
osom, and pecking the crumbs
ds. It was too much! Could
y-valves of the pent-up heart—
relief, the storm had blown over;
would come.

y of unutterable anguish of spirit
the moment were dried up, and
volcanic fury that burnt within.
some things that will not be
it burst at last! and, as words
uate to convey anything approach-
, it must be left to the imagina-
ll accounts, it is best so left, like

some other domestic outbreaks that defy descripti
and that, too, at a distance; for who, in their so
senses, would voluntarily linger within shot of
bursting volcano, or, if possibly to be avoided, st
within reach of a termagant's tongue, boiling
with venom and vengeance like Jemima Chopp
bolt's? Fortunately for David—although so fa
particeps criminis in the cruel downfall of
pouters, that he put the blunderbuss in Ephrai
hands—his was not the finger that pulled the trig
or we shudder to think what might have been
consequences. We should like, if we had ti
and his Lordship of Castlemore were not wait
for his breakfast, to inquire how it is that la
ladies—nine-tenths of them—besides inclining
the *embonpoint*, have such an universal inclinat
likewise to be termagants? It is a question
of interest, and might fill a chapter. But
Ephraim, and Ephraim alone, was the true culp
ipso facto and *de jure*,—if it was not Dav
finger exactly that pulled the trigger, it was
hand of David, *in foro conscientiæ*, that gave
trigger to be pulled; so, if he thought to s
all the guilt and odium on his crest-fallen accompl
who stood before his judges thunderstruck at
havoc he had made, he was very much mistaken.

"O you cruel!" cried Jemima, as soon as
could articulate, for the intensity of her emoti

even to have deprived her of
cruel!" and out burst Jemima
hysterical flood of tears.
d frowned, and fidgetted with
ked daggers at Jowls. David
things. He didn't know a bit
n. Nor is this the first time by
a husband "you cruel!" has
es of a woman's eyes.
act, that the moment an injured
usband "you cruel!" or "you
one but she is sure to weep.
account for it as they please, but
We have known more than one
incensed, too, not without good
gh savagely relentless till the
er, the moment she called him
you wretch!"—there must be
ouching in the words—has not
instant into a flood of tears,
loop-hole for forgiveness—fallen
on his shoulder, and forgiven

opperbolt's was not one of those
tures that can quickly forgive.
gh victims too often no doubt
insincerity, have an inexhaustible
comfort within themselves; or

how could they withstand the never-ending tri
and troubles they are put to? That is their ov
affair—a matter between themselves and their ov
hearts; and so, with all due honour and appreciatio
let it rest,—what has physiology or philosophy
do with it?

"Confusion!" exclaimed David, on whose sen
tive heart Jemima's tears fell like boiling oil; '
I'd only a-thought, as how, he couldn't have tak
a better aim than that. But it's all a-owing
my being over-persuaded to trust the gun out
my own hands,—and that's just like me."

"Like you!" sobbed Jemima, "yes, it *is* like y
and more's the shame to you! Look there—"

"It *was* very hunfortunate—" David ackno
ledged,—"very—he knowed it was."

Ephraim Jowls "would have died, that he woul
he declared, "rather than have done it, if h
a-knowed it."

"Misfortunes would happen sometimes," int
ceded Lord Fitzherbert, coming up, and soothin
stroking one of the pouters on the breast.

"Misfortune!" cried Jemima; "yes—if it w
misfortune—that 'ould alter the case. She'd
a heart in her bosom, if other people, she co
name, hadn't. Misfortune?—don't tell her;—m
fortune—it was! to be putting loaded guns into t
hands of a blind, blundering, booby jackanapes li

hawk from a haystack,—a-
ering all the neighbours out of
the whole farm-yard about
-and the colts there, and the
, capering, and cutting about,
ails like mad all over the place
a-waiting for his breakfast,
nselves sportsmen! Drat her,
there, the ostler's boy, wouldn't
an hollow with his penny pop-
no was to bring her pets to life
all this time his Lordship, there,
reakfast.—O you cruel!"—and
esh the scalding tear-drops thick
ma's fleshless cheek-bones.
ry hunfortunate! as he'd owned
vid. "But, as my Lord kindly
would sometimes happen in the
es.' There, he'd been landlord of
—now—let him see—twenty-seven
aelmas—and had never knowed
ue—a customer—never—not once
oots—"
med to be taking a capital aim, he
d Lord Fitzherbert; "but perhaps
vantage, flat on his back, and with
is eyes? He had remarked the

particularly steady aim he seemed to be taking fo
full ten minutes."

Ephraim never knowed the like of it in all h
born days. His Lordship would be good enough t
see—that if the whole blessed lot of them pigeon
hadn't got in the way just as they did, when the
wasn't wanted—he, Ephraim Jowls, would hav
bagged that rascally thief as dead as mutton."

His Lordship felt perfectly satisfied that M
Ephraim Jowls had shewn considerable skill in th
mode of attack—his strategics were admirable! bu
recommended him, the next time he got the enem
within shot, and the sun was out, to wear a pair
green goggles, if he fired on his back.

"Well," condoled David—having borne testimon
to the value of his Lordship's suggestion in a sto
about himself and his sporting achievements whic
we need not tell now—"it's no manner of use shed
ding no more brinies about it. What's done can
be undone. Them two's not the only milk-whi
pouters in the world—was they, boots?"

"No, not them, he should think not. Them?—n
There was Bob Acre, the off post-boy, knowed of fou
of the most beautifullest carriers, nearly ready t
take, he'd ever seed in his life. Half-a-crown and
gallon of beer would buy the whole lot on 'em."

"And so it shall!" cried David. "There, I've said i

no more about it. Forgive and
d ?—like Christian folk should."
ent maxim," agreed his Lordship,
er he had been caressing to the
David, and moving towards his

e vally of the pigeons, come to
Jemima, relaxing fast, and follow-
s Betsy's sweet voice was heard
breakfast was quite ready; "but
r, dear, little innocent pets there,
to nobody—and to—"
aggrivatingest thing, he owned,"
ever heard of, or seed in all his
all he could say—and he couldn't
had to die for it—if Mrs. Chop-
m the favour to accept—and here
cally placed something in Bob
ccept them two couple of carriers
d shake hands,—why all he could
e the proudest moment of his life,
't say no more."
ould—and that was the truth—say
or handsomer than that," cried
ting glance from Jemima Chop-
tto,—"now all of us come in,
; "and, when his Lordship's got
s we drown all hanimosities, as

Christians ought. And them's David Chopperbolt' sentiments, and he don't care, Ephraim Jowls, wh knows them, neither."

Now, Jemima Chopperbolt, blessed with th provident turn which, amidst the trials and trouble of life, is never without an eye to the main chanc and ready always to put the 'chops and changes' this sublunary state to the best account, was n without consolation in her affliction. Reflecting th the untimely fate of her pets might fortuitously turned to advantage, by supplying a deficiency, as happened, in that day's larder,—with heroic sel sacrifice off went Jemima—his Lordship having pr nounced Betsy's broiled ham and milk-rolls *parfaits* and the cup of peace having been thrice well draine —to give, without further delay, the necessary orde for putting them forthwith, out of sight, into a sub stantial pie-crust—to be ready, piping hot, for th arrival of the next up-coach.

"They bean't over young, that's certain," sai Jenny, as she popped them in the oven; "but th outsiders aren't over nice—that's one thing; an pigeon-pie is pigeon-pie—that's another."

David, who in his heart loved a sly joke as well a any one, though he often, "when he tried it on wit his missus," as he expressed it, "got his knuckles we rapped for it," and no doubt served him right, too had half a mind—happening to drop in as the pe

nd trussed on the kitchen-table—
yhow, Jenny, seeing is believing
nce, isn't it Jenny?" But David
t, and held his tongue; a plan we
commend to some other husbands
es David Chopperbolt, who talk a
ir 'missuses' tempers, and of
d all that sort of thing; but do
to sweeten the one, and, by so
st—to insure themselves every bit
serve, too, of the other.

CHAPTER XV.

LUCY NORTH.

To have seen Cecil Fitzherbert the day befor lolling luxuriously over his eleven o'clock breakfas in his brocaded satin dressing-gown and slipper with a bloodless face and *blaséd* air, as if the weig even of the tea-spoon with which he stirred h chocolate were too much for him; and, with grilled bone and divers dainty potted meats befo him, trying to persuade himself into an appeti while he indolently ran his eyes over the Cou column of the 'Morning Post,'—and now to ha observed him, dressed and ready for the day's wor whatever that might be, a little after nine, sittin resolutely at his breakfast in the little parlour the 'White Hart,' making awful inroads into the t and milk-rolls, broiled ham, and devilled fowl, a looking the picture of elegant health and happines

-you would have scarcely supposed
, to be one and the same epicurean
was.

something very efficacious in early
troubled slumbers, and betimes up
aching head, and cheerful heart,
k the day's ever-producing duties.
Lordship been in Hill Street at
saw him breaking his egg so
ok, and running on with all sorts
ery to Walter Pemberton—who,
om a long early ramble among the
y *Fieldings*, was making ample
ong fast over a smoking cup of
pile of buttered toast at a table
t would as soon have thought of
ng his master out of his morning
, his Lordship, certainly, might
bed. Charlie Ferrers, or Nugent
nton Palmer, or a dozen others,
though not perhaps more loved,
is Lordship's drooping head from
the morning-star began to wane

ra winks could hardly have been
conscience, by his bitterest enemy.
of us are—and frequently those
st fancy themselves their own

masters—to habits that tie us down, and lash, an degrade us far more despotically, with all ou vaunted liberty, than any Russian serf is belabour by his rulers. What a blessing when chance gives the opportunity to slip the collar and break from t fetters of our self-sought bondage! We know n the delights of freedom till we have escaped fro slavery; we feel not the weariness of the bed sloth, till, like Walter Pemberton, we find the ner and vigour we want in the health-blowing breezes the early morning.

We lie, and we linger, and we long, and languish—and the roses fade from our cheeks, d Lady Lollatease and Sir Juniper Jollynose,— dyspepsia and the dropsy, walk in arm in arm. dear Lady, and my dear Sir Juniper, you pitiable slaves!—slaves to a hard and mercil master, who is wearing you both out with insatiable demands. Why will you slave and yourselves into the grave for him? Cannot you he is a great tyrant, and will pay you, in the lo run, with stripes and scorn? And yet you *will* w for him and wear his hireling badge. How m nanimous of you! You must suffer a great de Yes, you say, you do suffer sometimes martyrdo Every one can see it. What is it that so fascina you, to slave for such a tyrant—to rivet with y own hands, stronger and stronger every day,

ou, when you could, if you would,
wrench? We, your well-wishers,
, tell you what it is—nothing but
ness—idleness!—the curse that is
Do be advised! Just for once,
w, if heaven smile on you as
s to-day—shake off the sloth that,
m, is feeding on the roses, and
and dropsy to your bed sides; get
y couches, and go and give your
ey have never had—a sight of the
ou have no conception how much
and lungs will be to you, what a
you will eat, like his Lordship
the pleasant parlour of 'The
how sweet-tempered, likewise, you

value in anything that induces us
our bad habits; and it was
Cecil Fitzherhert, as he seized his
icked bare bone after bone of the
atiating in unmeasured terms on
arly hours, and the delights of
simple tastes and habits; just as if
h his portfolio on the hill-side by
ly a mess of bread and milk before
sciousness of aught but truth and
ossession of his heart.

But there are some natures on which falsehoo seems to sit very easy, which appear never to be perfectly unconcerned as when enveloped in mendacious maze, as it were, of their own weavin affording them the licence of running riot in tricke and deceit, and a sort of blushless *sanctum* where to take refuge, seemingly, even from their ow thoughts. And there must be something mo than the supposed necessity for falsehood—with t view of merely hiding a fault—that actuates the li in his tactics, one would think. Nine times out ten, he takes a vast deal more pains in his operatio than there is any occasion for, or for which he w ever be repaid by the results. Watch him, if y can have patience, to the end; and it will be the ra exception to the rule if—clever howsoever he m be—he does not outwit himself, and get, sooner later, fast caught in his own net.

"Another *Gainsborough*, I suppose, for us son day?" said Lord Fitzherbert. "I meant to be up wi the lark, myself, this morning; but, somehow, don't know when I've slept so soundly as I d last night."

"I find fresh air, plenty of exercise, and modera meals," replied Walter Pemberton, smiling, "the be of all soporifics."

"Yes, but I was sitting all yesterday," laughe Lord Fitzherbert, "and, yet, I slept like a top."

ested Pemberton, "though your
your mind may have not been

mind is an antidote to sleep, is it

depends, I should think, on the
to do," answered Pemberton.
is it," assented Lord Fitzherbert,
e for a minute or two.
uch food for your portfolio here-
his Lordship, returning from

e," replied Pemberton. "There
oks and corners here and there;
ety of character."
nagine. Have you travelled much

."
don't consider it essential, for land-
r from our own picturesque little

ld afford it, nothing would delight
spend a long summer, just for once
ng the masters and mountains of
ough, as you say—for our *Gains-*
, and *Copley Fieldings*—if we made
f the opportunities little England

affords us—of its inexhaustible pictorial resources we should have small need, and little wish, for a thing beyond. I fancy, our *best hits* are those ma oftenest at the nearest marks *at home.*

"Further on I believe," agreed Cecil Fi herbert, "there is some pretty country here a there?"

"Do you know Copsedenne at all?" asked Pe berton.

"Yes, a little."

"I am told there are some sweet bits abo there."

"I shouldn't wonder. Are you thinking going?"

"Yes. I thought of running across to-day, see an old friend who has promised me a shak down; and lots of 'sweet bits,' he tells me, if I come for them."

"Ah! if that be so, I'm in luck's way," e claimed Cecil. "I am bound for Marksbury. D you know it?"

"Very well, indeed; and a sweet spot it is! If have time, I don't think I can resist taking a pee at it again before my holiday is over," answere Pemberton.

"Good! Then, you'll accept a seat in m chaise to-day—and let me drop you?"

asure!" and, this settled, Lord
bell.
t was overwhelmed with obliga-
ordship had been comfortable at
A chaise and pair for Copse-
y in ten minutes. If my Lord
e the chaise on to Marksbury—
The road was very bad—the
be indicted—Mr. Grabbs had
at any time his Lordship was
he would only send a line—any
d Chopperbolt, could do—his

se—certainly."
rton would be going, would he,
That would give him time for
ere'd be pigeon-pie by then."
erton would not wait for the
ing with his Lordship."
ensued to Mr. Pemberton from
on the part of his host, so
founded for a moment with the
that rushed through his mind,
vine; had not something, at that
the street, which seemed to be
abours with one accord to their
turned the current of David's
us saved poor Walter what he

hated most of all things on earth—sudden ob
quious homages to self.

"Ah! here they come—so they do," cried Da
peeping at a respectful distance over Lord F
herbert's shoulder into the road, as a long fune
procession made its appearance, evidently, from
paraphernalia, and the number of girls linked
couples hand-in-hand, and dressed in white fi
head to feet, that of a young maiden.

"Ah! Lucy North—poor Lucy! I suppo
exclaimed Pemberton, "they were talking about
in the village yesterday?"

"How old?" asked Lord Fitzherbert. "I
thing!"

"Not seventeen," replied David, squeezing his
kin hard, and turning ashes as the coffin passed b

"Much beloved no doubt?"

"If ever there was a hangel, then, on earth,"
swered David, bending forward to keep the coffi
sight as far as he could stretch his neck, and winl
his eyes—"it was Lucy North, poor hinnocent!"

"Indeed!" said Lord Fitzherbert. "Sad
very!"

"Terrible!" echoed David. "And so beaut
too, wasn't she?"

"Yes, and so *good!*" added Pemberton,
all accounts?"

"Good as a hangel?" exclaimed David. "I

the good that hangel did on
's Mr. Grabbs—a-coming there,
ners—that tall, dark gentleman
white handkerchief in his hand

nquired Lord Fitzherbert. "He
"
of that—no relation like," said
f respect like. Just to think now
come Monday—he and Wheedle
o they were forced to it, as the
nd sold 'em out—that they did
mother and child—hearth and
left—not even the bed, as you
Grabbs do say, though, it nearly

ld them out? did he?" repeated
, grasping tighter the chair-back
ed—"and now with that lawn
to his nose!"
m home to the heart, mustn't it?"
do, I'm sure. Though they do say
got no hearts, or none to speak of."
pretty truly I expect," agreed Lord
all, stately, impassive figure of Mr.
, perhaps, passing before his eyes
of nineteen out of twenty of 'em."
alike, are they?" observed David.

" Mustn't be too hard on 'em—though they be u
chaps, some of 'em, to get in the fangs of. I
Grabbs, he *do* believe, they say, in the Judgment;
least ways, he says he do—and goes to church af
noons as well as mornings and feast days, when the
any. That lawering *is* terrible dirty word, isn't
Grabbs says it do make his blood run cold often;
he can't help it—he must do it," he says—" it's
duty—and duty *must* be done! 'He'd rather,'
says, have died almost than laid a finger on
Norths—they were such good, poor, honest, ha
less, decent sort of folks like. And Lucy not
of your giddy, gadding, gossiping, gallivant
things—letting out the little fire, and the pot a-gett
cold, thinking only of the fine gown on her ba
but work, work, work, with Lucy, from morn
night, and night to morn—sewing—sewing—sew
—stitching—stitching—stitching,—it really do m
one's head spin round to only think of it. But,
what can ten fingers do more than they can—
only twelve hours to a day? What's six shir
week—and with all that work in 'em Grabbs
Wheedle wear—at twelvepence a-shirt—to k
body and soul together? It's clear impossible! n
isn't it?—specially with an old broken-down, b
ridden mother to keep out of it—and appear neat
clean always, and decent-like o' Sundays—let al
the Doctor's bill?"

altogether beyond his compre-
ged Lord Fitzherbert.
was heart-rending!" said Walter

resumed David,—"the Doctor,
lsome. He must say the doc-
might bring against 'em—stood
tter chance, he thought, at The
at came, than some of them
said was true of 'em.—Not a
t one, would he, the Doctor take,
ith;—no—nor not one of the
r—not one—though you should
ps on 'em piled up in the cup-
the pill-boxes, too."
ld them up, did he?" sympathized

d," continued David. "But, you
do say it nearly broke his heart,
Wheedle had a mortgage on the
-that was it. Jem North—that's
vas a wild one—went wrong some-
his mother's heart—more shame
ut that wasn't Wheedle's fault, no-
vas. The widow wanted it—and
the money to pay Jem's debts.
it, and, worse luck to him! bolted
'plexy-stroke laid the mother on

her back. But, as long as Lucy was left her, s
Lucy was well and strong, and could work a
sew, nobody heard no complaints—nobody kn
what Lucy had for dinner—or whether she sou
times had any dinner at all, come to that—or w
to bed hungry—or was warm, or cold—or cloth
or half-naked—or how she got together the
pences, poor child! to make the pot boil.
flesh and blood arn't nothing only flesh and blo
It's no use saying they're hard as iron—they ar
They'll bear a plaguey-sight of beating, won't th
But they're only flesh and blood, stand what t
will—flesh and blood!—not iron, are they?"

His Lordship perfectly agreed—"flesh and bl
were but flesh and blood—not iron—undoubtedly

Walter Pemberton had his doubts, "whe
they were not often tougher far than any
whatever."

"Howsomever," proceeded David, "Lucy fel
—in course she did. Who wouldn't fall ill?—
sew, sew, sew—stitch, stitch, stich—from sunris
sunset. Mercy on us!—the frame of a nav
gentlemen, couldn't stand it."

"Navvy!" cried Pemberton; "the navvy's wo
a mere plaything, in comparison."

"That's true!" said David, "as ever you spo
Well, in course all was up, as you may say, w
Lucy took to bed. That was a settler! Then

nd the pot did get cold. But,
he strive and struggle to keep
as long as legs would carry her?
ones!—and once the prettiest,
in all Braybrook. But nobody
e was getting paler, and paler,
inner—why?—because Lucy had
a kind word for everybody—just
n't know Wheedle had foreclosed,
ned out—and just as if there
ot one, at her heart—and there
hem beaks, the bailiffs."
ed his Lordship.
ton "believed, poor Lucy must
far beyond what Wheedle and
k held out, that gave her so much
fort—to bear her load so meekly to

it—that must have been it, he
ed David. "That religion was a
He knowed once—when he was a
as once when—"
e turned them out, did he?" said
, twiddling sharp round the *Breguet*
chain.
David was just going to tell his
ll—one day Lucy was missed at
e next, nobody had seen Lucy going

to or coming from the doctor's. That was
common. But people had their own business
look after—their own fish to fry, as the saying is—
no complaint came from the poor widow's.
terrible to die of hunger, cold, and nakedness—and
a Christian land, too—and under our very noses
larders like. But Grabbs says, 'it can't be helped
it's in the natural nature of things. The poor
never cease out of the land; nor mortgages,' he sa
'nor rent, nor taxes, nor wicked children, nor sm
pox; nor laws, nor lawyering."

"Nor pride, nor vanity, nor display, nor the
of power, nor injustice, nor oppression," ad
Pemberton.

"It's the nat'ral nature of things, isn't it?
Grabbs says," rejoined David; "a nat'ral consequ
'spose that's it?"

"Rather a cause, I should think," conside
Pemberton, "and a pretty fruitful one for the Mes
Grabbs and Wheedles, by all appearances."

"Starvation ain't a quick destroyer, anyho
resumed David. "It does its work by inches, d
it? In a Christian land it oughtn't, ought it?
it does, don't it? 'And within sniff, too, every h
almost,' as Grabbs says, 'of our very larders'—mo
the shame, isn't it?"

"And Lucy—" reminded Lord Fitzherbert, tak
up his hat.

t David was a-coming to. Well,
rumour—nobody would believe
hat Mary North was dying, and
cottage. Then didn't the neigh-
'em; and the good Samaritans
comforts for the death-struck
sight to see? And when they'd
urf, poor thing! and there wasn't
Wheedle alone for that—but it
be only the nat'ral nature like of
they do enough? no, not they.
's lap chuck-full of good gifts
ut heaps of warm clothes on her
she couldn't eat, with victuals and
ie oil, poor lamb! into her wounds
be comforted and of good cheer
she couldn't, and wouldn't be
ir comfortings, and their gifts
me too late—*then* didn't Grabbs
eart, and have no rest of his life
f she liked to go, into the orphan
, poor child! she don't want no
e Christ has prepared for her in
lon't he know, and Wheedle, too,
—that they're not going to lose
—let them alone for that—a hold-
handkerchief there to his nose,

not they? Lor! it *is* astonishing, as my Mis
says, what those Wheedle and Grabbs do make,
way or the other—let alone silk scarfs and
bands—by following of them funerals."

Lord Fitzherbert was "perfectly astonished!"

"Now there's my Tommy," said David, lowe
his voice—"hang me!"—his Lordship would excu
father's feelings—"hang me, then! if I woul
rather see him a-playing his fiddle there, along
streets for his daily bread, than own him, the lik
that Grabbs, with a lawn handkerchief to his n
taking-on that fashion; yes, so help me! i
would put all the money in the Mint into
breeches pockets. But lor!—I wouldn't let my mi
hear me say so, if it were ever so—wouldn't
smash the fiddle, sure as sixpence."

Lord Fitzherbert "honoured David Chopper
for his sentiments; but could hardly think a mo
would be so cruel;" and, looking at his watch,
now quite ready for his bill and chaise and
when it quite suited Master David to let him
them. The fiddle was a noble instrument—his L
ship honoured anybody who played the fiddle. W
knew? The boy—he had music in his eyes—mi
some day—more unlikely things had happene
might some day, mightn't he, make a Paganini?

In less than a quarter of an hour, deeply interes

gh how much edified by the poor
we know not, and loaded with
rom all sides, Lord Fitzherbert and
n were merrily chatting and jogging
e rough road would permit, full of
nd carelessness, in the direction of

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CRUST AND COLD CUP.

Dr. Johnson—and he was a sensible and so thinking man by all accounts—loved of all thi next the outside-cut of a boiled round of beef, motion of a post-chaise. There were consider differences in the Doctor's time, no doubt, in p chaises, as there are now in our railway-carria Some were comfortable enough, while others ough have been indicted as public nuisances and inflicti As regards these our own palmy days, let any having the least rightful regard for his lungs limbs, travel just for once by the South-Eastern, or South-Western lines, in one of the close dirty ho boxes, or what they call their "second class," an he doesn't have a sigh for old times, with all t faults, he must have stronger powers of endur than we can boast of.

arts, we never think, when we are
ortmanteau for a holiday, of those
of post-chaises and spanking post-
t. They are gone for ever, and
e leave to think, much that was
and healthful. We address not our-
nchester or Birmingham. Nobody,
s other than ideas of business and
heir practical, fast driving names.
o just now with such picturesque,
rsonages as my Lord Fitzher-
er Pemberton, who, jogging along
Master David Chopperbolt's best
" spite of rough roads, and ruts,
had not an ache nor anxiety, that
t, it might be, that Bob Acre had
of an eye for the sublime and
ld not hurry as he did past all
," enough to make a poet or
confound his practicality!

Acre! thy sun is set; and what,
No more shalt thou—a genuine
nes, and engraven in the memories
n thee now as the million may—
blue pea-buttoned jacket, leathern
ogany short tops, trot away a-pace
ed bit of blood, cracking thy whip,
gains as thou dashedst along,

happy if only his Lordship was contented, and, as
prize of thy horsemanship and metal, dropped
extra shilling into thy horny fist, wherewith to m
merry at 'The White Hart' tap, and treat thy S
to a fairing, come Shrovetide, at Braybrook, bless
pretty face! No! no more hand gallops up
windmill slope—no more shillings—no more me
makings, and fairings for thy Sally. Even the
Shrovetide fair is swept away. And they do tall
sweeping away, too, the village bells—his revere
the Rector's son reading for orders, and not lik
music. Poor David! well he may look in a br
study all day; and Jemima's nose get redder
redder, although Tommy has been obliged to
aside his fiddle, and take to something profitabl
earn an honest living. It's all up, they say, v
thee, sweet Braybrook,—the only faces on whic
smile is seen—a seeming real, contented, gleeful s
—being Grabb's and Wheedle's; which shows,
deed, "what a pass," as David says, "things n
have come to in poor old Braybrook."

No—journeying now is no longer a matter
pleasure; nobody regards it in that light. It
practical age we live in, or what looks very like
Everything is done by one rule. Pleasure? T
Business, business! If Aunt Susan, or Master Ha
or Johnny, or Miss Amelia are off to spend a f
night with Grandmother Leigh, or Uncle Potts

at little men and women of business
re is no lingering a moment by the
s time, nor coin spent—scarcely the
ve will, of catching a passing glimpse
chimney-pots and peeping spires,
as our birthright. On, on, fast as
There is no looking forward, so
much less behind us, though our
best were straining to get a peep at
and waving us, may be, an eternal
o—it is, on—on—on—faster and
ot look—and if we did, we could
going to Grandmother Leigh, and
cannot wait a moment—on—on—
ee what little men and women of
etting?
es, half way, for a biscuit and glass
! there's not a moment to be lost.
one—quick—never mind the change
logs!—slam, bang—on—on—on!
tes just for passengers. Always
all never get to Grandmother
e Potts. "There's no room here."
ne." "Make haste—there, between
and the cadaverous-looking gentle-
pirator. Slam, bang—on—on—on
ter. Where are we now? Look
us! at what a rate we're going.

Fire and fury! how the trees do gallop. Put dow a window, or Amelia will faint. O, how dreadfull stuffy! No, the cadaverous-looking gentleman mu have the windows up. Break it with the umbrell or we shall die! On—on—slam, bang—on—on—o —faster, and faster. Stopping again—it's scand lous! —we shall never get to Grandmother Leigh and Uncle Potts—we'll write to the Editor of th Times about it. Slam, bang—now we go again- bravo! that's your sort—go it ye cripples—mercy Amelia's fainting. Stop—stop—help—help!—fir murder! What's the matter, mum? Here we a —Reigate—Reigate! Heaven be thanked! Wh little men and women of business we are gettin though!

More a great deal, we fear, than Lord Fitzherbe and Walter Pemberton could say for themselve lolling at their leisure in Master David's yello "po'-chaise," as if time were not worth a pinc of snuff, and life in August were dedicated on to poesy and pastime; while every now and the as they came to the hills, they would jump ou and hold converse with the trees and brooks an dells and dingles by the wayside; Walter Pemberto finding something wherewith "to point a moral a adorn a tale" at every turn.

"What a waste of time!" we think we hea Mr. Bagman say. Good Bagman, you have muc

. Be generous. Take all the
n possibly require for yourself.
large enough for us all. There
should run foul of each other.
; and, though we travel different
e and the same journey's end for
nan. Keep moving by all means
re is space enough and time for
And, though Walter Pemberton
by the way among the dells and
s vocation to fulfil, good Bagman,
or may we, with our creed, believe
poor author and artist, as you
in this world's goods and chattels
ndle to yourself,—he has his use,
e assured of it; and, according to
him, may be found, it is to be
d, a not less profitable servant, in
ther Bagman.

k," said Cecil Fitzherbert, smiling
of Walter Pemberton's,—"How
of life make up the sum of human
g succeeded in clutching a bunch
kles he had been plunging at for
r a deep dike choked with brambles,
em in triumph over his head,—"I
u find it difficult, after your senti-
among the 'nooks and corners,' to

accommodate yourself, all at once, to the unpoetic realities of Gray's Inn?"

"They are rather stern and sterile-looking I mu own, at first," admitted Pemberton.

"What says your learned brother Herbert you, and your rambling habits?" asked Ce "Brother Herbert isn't troubled much by t poetical, I should fancy, to look at him. Prou though, immensely of his author-brother?"

"Loves him dearly, I make no doubt," laugh Pemberton — "immensely! — in memory of mother—as a bit of his own flesh and blood; b has a supreme contempt, most likely, for his pai and poetry, and all such pauper practices."

"They are not noted, I suppose, of themselve smiled Cecil, "for best keeping 'the fire in, a the pot well boiling,' as Master David says."

"I'm afraid not. There's the deuce of it! H about right there. Poetry does cling devotedly its twin sister, poverty—that's the devil of it! B if it don't best keep the embers alive, and t pot from getting cold,—it does do this—sweete the cup of cold water and the crust, when ther nothing better left."

"Do you think so?" said Cecil. "I thoug no imagination revelled at large and rioted luxuries unbounded like your poet's. 'Gad! never read a page of Goethe, Byron, or 'La

I feel the most superlative con-
sts and milk-and-water, and so

n only with a carnal eye, per-
emberton.
exactly about that. All I fancy
d a pinch of salt to my porridge,
think of taking up one or the
own, as put a jewelled necklace
erbolt's skinny neck, to make her

replied Pemberton—"hard-up
st pinch,—come to that—there's
ling alone worth having, to wash
, and give it relish."
's that? It must have singular
of poetry. 'The Pleasures of
Sermons'—are about as good as
prose, don't you think—to make
up go down passably?"
;," said Pemberton.
hat is it?" asked Cecil, peeling a
had just cut from the hedge.
d Pemberton, taking from his
ck pocket-volume in a common
ling, much defaced by wear and
at I find the best relish with the
'

Cecil Fitzherbert cast a look on the title-pag as Walter Pemberton held it towards him; whi a slight shade between incredulity and impatien passed over his face. "O yes—of course—of course said he—"everybody knows that."

"Do they?" said Pemberton, replacing the boo in his pocket. "One would hardly think it, eithe would they?—to see the wry faces many of make over the crusts and cold cups, when th come to us."

"For my own part," said Cecil, shrugging h shoulders and going on with the thorn switch—"a I dare say you'll think me very wicked,—I nev read it."

Walter Pemberton started. "Never read it exclaimed he.

"Never — to say seriously — attentively — sou seekingly, of my own accord," replied Cecil.

"Then, I pity you—truly and sincerely pity you said Pemberton, in a tone of sadness rather than reproach.

"Why so?"

"Rather tell me, why you do not read it?"

"Because I could never find in it," answer Cecil—drawing the peel in rolls from off the sti with his pen-knife and flinging them away—"cou never find in it what they say is there."

"What look you for?" asked Pemberton. "T

personification of the Deity, and the definition of His attributes, as you would draw Him and them in form and colours most pleasing to yourself, perhaps?"

"Not exactly so," replied Cecil. "For what I have the faculties given me to see—if clearly shewn to me, I hope; and the willingness to feel the truth and comfort of—when my reason is convinced."

"O, then, I don't despair of you, if that be all. You have but to look long enough; and pray for the right, earnest spirit wherewith to judge withal—and no fear of the truth, and the comfort, too, coming that, you say, you seek for."

"I have prayed," said Cecil Fitzherbert—still intent on cutting out the figure of a dog's head on the knob of his stick,—"and prayed earnestly, but never had a prayer answered that I know of."

"What did you pray for?" asked Pemberton, getting interested in the turn the conversation had taken, from a natural feeling of kindness towards one for whom—spite of the wide difference of their habits and opinions—he was sensible, somehow, of an increasing interest at every step.

"Sometimes, I hope, for what there was no sin in asking," replied Cecil.

"The things withheld to our most fervent prayers," reminded Pemberton, "are among the number of Heaven's greatest mercies vouchsafed; if we did but know it, and would but think so."

"A comfort-working creed, if you can believe i smiled Cecil. "I suppose it's that makes the cr and cold cup go down so thankfully? It has t merit certainly. Had any good Samaritan drop in, though, with a plate of roast beef and plu pudding at the moment—would it have been a s of less love and mercy for poor *miserrimus?* I c see it in that light, and that's the truth of it."

"Because you estimate the creature's debt gratitude to his Maker, perhaps," replied Pe berton, "by the world's rule of man's debts to ma

"We can only work according to the stren given us," returned Cecil. "Most seems expec often from those who have the least, by Geor to give."

"That cannot be your excuse or mine for disc tent," said Pemberton. "And where it might se to hold with our sympathies the strongest—are sure that the strength has been put out as ought to have been, to the right uses it was desig for?"

"It shows faith, at any rate, don't it?" as Cecil, polishing up the dog's head with his coat-c "to prefer Heaven's help to your own? There be no lack of faith, any how, in that."

"It shows, certainly, about as much as, and one whit more than, tallies with our indolence fancy," replied Pemberton.

"You think—it's better to do a little more, then," said Cecil, "and to pray a little less?"

"I think there are many of us make what we call faith," explained Pemberton, "a sad, mistaken, fatal pretext for works not done—an excuse for self-non-exertion in a thousand shapes. To ask Heaven to give us what we want, is so far an act of faith, that we do ask. If we can get by asking, or without it, we give Him the credit; if not, except by hard labour, or the exercise of our own abilities, the aching of our own heads and hearts—we place it to our own."

"Then, whether we get by asking, or by helping ourselves," said Cecil, blowing the dust out of the dog's eyes—"it seems we are to have no credit either way—that's hard."

"O, yes, a great deal!" exclaimed Pemberton, "if we earnestly desire it. But how many there are, seemingly, have no fancy for anything but what they can have for asking. Their faith is prodigious, as long as they can obtain. The worst of it is—at last they get so pampered—so idle—so unreasonable,—that, though legs of mutton were rained down on them, the chances are, they wouldn't be contented unless they were, ready-roasted, and served with lots of gravy."

"'Gad! there's some truth in that," smiled Cecil, giving the last touch to the dog's nose. "Not bad that."

A mutual silence of some minutes ensued duri
which Lord Fitzherbert seemed to be intent only
the finishing touches of Ponto's ears, and Wal
Pemberton to be contemplating a fine effect caus
by the sun's rays reflected in gorgeous tints of ev
colour through a watery cloud.

"Touching the legs of mutton ready-roasted,"
sumed Cecil Fitzherbert, "I suppose labour is
best sauce. I have often thought, the hedger
ditcher's life was about as happy a one as any.
that fellow there! What cares has he, beyond h
just to pay the last week's score with this wee
wages?"

"And why? Because the little he knows, at
events, has taught him," said Pemberton, "that,
eat, and drink, and sleep, he must put his o
strength out, his own hand to the plough—or sta
he would assuredly. And, therefore, he d
work; and, therefore, is probably a happier man th
his landlord up there in the great park-house, he c
his better."

"If compelled to work for my mutton as he do
then," said Cecil, "you mean I should be happier

"Not without the requisite *et cætera*," repl
Pemberton. "There must be fitness in all thin
The back there is suited to the burden."

"You think I should not be an enviable object, v
in Giles' jacket and high lows."

"Most unpicturesque, I'm afraid," smiled Pemberton. "About as much so as, or perhaps more than Giles would be in one of your Lordship's court suits."

"But you say, I must work—must use the strength that's given me, though a Lord—must not lie supine—that's it—calling on Heaven to rain down legs of mutton ready roasted—if I would be happy—only as happy as Jem Giles?"

"You must be, I suppose, just a reasonable and responsible creature," smiled Pemberton.

"And, then, you do really, and truly, and sincerely believe," rejoined Cecil—holding up Ponto for inspection,—"you do positively think, and believe, eh?—that there is, really, some use in a Lord as well as a labourer?"

"Every bit as much!"

"Well, that's a comfort! I was getting rather jealous of Jem Giles, I can tell you. You think it depends, then, for happiness, pretty much in this life, on both Jem Giles and his Lordship doing their duty, eh—in the state of life, &c?"

"That's about it in all probability. In the great universal human family, of course there must be various sorts and sizes, big and little, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, mustn't there? as, in the forests there are trees, great and small, living animals of all nature's shapes, and sizes; and, in our grounds and gardens, fruits and flowers

in abundance, of every degree, and description, flavour, and hue, and variety, both useful and or mental—one and all equally the creation and gift Him who has made nothing in vain; and each and of which have, we know, their individual, and rela and collective spheres and uses. Nor may any attempt to do without the other, that's certain, w out danger to the integrity and welfare of the whe

"It is something even to be ornamental, t that's a blessing!" rejoiced Lord Fitzherbert, ranging his cravat by the glass-back of a minia pocket hair-brush and whisker-comb in one, as chaise rattled into Copsedenne. "Ah! and here are to part, are we? But not for long, I hope," ad Cecil, warmly pressing the hand of his new-fo friend, and really feeling sorry at heart to say g bye—how often so with natures the most opposit each other! "You really do think of running for a day or two to Marksbury?"

"Truly," promised Pemberton. "I have set heart on it."

"Good!" cried Cecil, adding his address in p to his card, and placing it in Pemberton's h "And if you are not too proud—you authors artists are such awful dons—I think I can insure a 'shake-down' at the Vicarage, too—and a he welcome, which is better still. You promise? *revoir*. I shall be looking out for you, remembe

"Yes, yes, one of these mornings, pos," returned Walter Pemberton. "And, then, we'll have another touch at the crust and cold cup—won't we?"

"By George! won't we, that's all?" said Cecil. "Not a bad idea that, eh—not bad at all—of the showers of legs of mutton, ready roasted. By George! shan't forget that in a hurry. Adieu, adieu!"

"A fair and graceful bark enough that!" mentally exclaimed Walter Pemberton, gazing for a moment or two after the wheels that bore Cecil Fitzherbert away. "But without rudder, alas! or ballast. Gaily and gallantly—while skies are fair—it may sail away, and with flying colours, too; but, come the tempest—the dark hour of trial over—left to the mercy of the storm,—where, then, will it be?—Lost—inevitably lost!"

CHAPTER XVII.

TOM AND JERRY.

HAVING seen Cecil Fitzherbert thus far safe his journey, and entertaining no fear but that he arrive at its termination without the slightest ne sity for insuring life or limb; we will just step v the reader, if he or she please, into a fast tr always at hand for our own express use, and, ceding his Lordship of Castlemore, take a peep the good folks of the Vicarage again, and see w Aunt Gertrude and Annie Lawton have been ab since their morning shoppings and little sisterly vi of charity and benevolence.

As to Clermont Onslow, we may be pretty s though apparently hard at work over that kn problem, and those confounded Greek iambics—wh somehow, had teased him more than any tasks Vicar had ever set him—where his thoughts we

till, having wasted the whole morning from breakfast to luncheon, in literally doing little more than scribbling the names of Annie Lawton and Cecil Fitzherbert in brackets together, to try his penmanship it might be, and blotting sheet after sheet of the iambics all to no purpose, then getting the problem into such a mess as to puzzle a far greater conjurer than even the Vicar himself to make head or tail of,—up he jumped, and tearing the papers into fragments, and tossing them into the waste basket—"there's a fine morning's work!" said he pettishly. "Can't tell what's come to me—botheration!—may as well go, then, and see about getting Tom and Jerry ready."

Now, though the Vicar of Marksbury was a grave, and, in certain moods, might seem a stern, and sometimes harsh man; and, beyond his old white cob that had had the honour of carrying his Reverence for nearly twenty years, had few partialities out of the immediate circle of his daily routine duties, it was very different with his sister Gertrude Lawton, or, Aunt Gerty, as she was usually called in the family. Aunt Gerty must have a pet of one sort or another, at home or abroad, ever at her call. And why not? seeing that Annie, her own first and best and sweetest of pets, could not be always at her side, and Clermont of the kind to be ever scampering after Annie; and that it had not, as yet, pleased her to give away as pretty a little hand, and as an affec-

tionate and true and faithful a little heart as hon
man could ever wish to call his own? Aunt Gert
heart was—little body as it beat in—far too la
and full of consequence to be ever unemployed;
if Miss Annie and Master Clermont would
engross the whole of it to themselves—would cru
leave it now and then to cast about it for someth
else to pour its overflowings on,—they had no right
be jealous if other pets came stealing in sometim
and sharing the superabundance which they had
give away.

First on the list, after her own dearest pet of p
who was to have all her money and everything
when she died, if she didn't marry—all but
silver button and her blessing for Clermont, if
behaved himself—and, if report spoke true, a r
windfall would Aunt Gerty's little all be one
these days—a matter, some said, of not a per
less than £300 a-year 3 per Cents. Reduced—
Dunlop thought, in his heart, it was far nearer £40
—first on the list, we say, after Miss Annie, ca
Waddle, Aunt Gerty's constant body-guard, a m
formidable little fellow of his inches!—for Clerm
used to declare, "he could put him, if he liked, i
a quart jug"—to our own taste a very ill-favou
little gentleman, though, no doubt, intrinsically,
the more valuable for his very ugliness. Wad
certainly stood first after Annie, which was

reason very likely of Master Clermont's piques and jealousies, and occasional spiteful inuendos not at all to his credit, and which, if he meant to have that silver button, it was surprising he couldn't see the danger of indulging in. Then came the gold and silver pheasants, a sort of partnership concern between herself and Annie, though no hands ever dared to feed them, without permission, but her own; then the bantams, and the Guinea fowls, and the Java sparrows, and canaries; and last, but not least—indeed, we think we ought to have placed them next to Waddle himself—her basket pony-chaise and Tom and Jerry. Here was a list! But it was all Annie and Clermont's fault. Who knows?—perhaps, after all, it was only a sly scheme of theirs, to keep that shrewd Dan Dunlop at his distance, sniffing after every nice little woman, with a jointure, as if she were a stuffed haggis, or a savory dish of cock-a-leekie.

Well might Aunt Gertrude be proud of her pony-pets, for were they not the pride of every eye and heart in the village and for five miles round it? And well might Clermont be immensely proud, too, of his post of chief equerry and master of the horse combined, to which he had been appointed, *nem con.* by universal acclamation.

"And, pray, where are you all off to now?" asked the Vicar, coming up, as Aunt Gerty and Annie,

with Clermont in attendance, appeared at the h door ready dressed for a drive, while Tom s Jerry stood impatiently pawing the ground, as to the full as much in the humour for a g scamper as Miss Annie and Mr. Clermont the selves. "These are your manners, are they, to running away when company is coming? A where, pray?"

"Oh! on a multitude of little missions," s Aunt Gerty, "that won't brook delay. Let's Annie, dear—where first?"

Annie had to think for a moment.

"I'll be bound I can guess," said the Vicar.

"Of course you can," cried Aunt Gerty, snat ing up the whip; "and natural enough. Yes, to Se Manning's, to be sure—for the last new fashi Go about these frights, indeed, and a real live L coming? Come, come, Annie love—we sh get through one half we have to do, if we stand h chattering any longer."

"And if Lord Fitzherbert should come?" wan the Vicar to know?

"Shall *I* stop?" asked Clermont, glancing at An

"You stop?" cried Aunt Gerty; "and leave to the mercy of that Jerry? Patience! what nex He gets so saucy, he does, the audacious dog! I hardly hold him sometimes with all my strength."

"Ah! if you are going there," said the Vic

"tell Lucy I shall walk over and have a good long chat with her in a day or two. And a bit of spare-rib and an apple dumpling, mind, Clermont, the first time Dolly has a mind that way."

"Yes, yes," said Clermont; "and a glass of the old 'Carbonnel,' Sir; nothing would please her better."

"And if Lord Fitzherbert *should* come," repeated the Vicar, "pray what am I to say?"

"That Annie has gone to look at the new fashions," replied Aunty; "that will be ample. Do you think his Lordship of Castlemore don't know that young ladies want new bonnets now and then in Marksbury as well as Mayfair? Would you ever have her show her face next Sunday in that frightful dowdy, now!—and Anne and Rosalie both coming out, Selina says, in their bran new *pailles de riz?*"

"Very well," laughed the Vicar; "I shall tell him exactly what you say."

"Not for worlds!" cried Annie, knowing her father's literality.

"Why not?" asked Clermont. "Yes, do Sir?"

"I have said it," settled the Vicar; and, waving his hand, while Annie clapped hers with the fun that her father's solemn phiz seemed to have filled her thoughts with, off dashed Tom and Jerry, pleased no less than Aunt Gerty to taste

the fresh breeze of the purple heather that scorch
day.

"We must be brushing up our best manr
too, as well as our bonnets, mustn't we, lov
laughed Aunty, rattling up to Selina Manni
magasin de modes. "I wonder, love, whether L
Horner has got anything would do?"

"'Hints on Etiquette' I suppose you've le
by heart," presumed Clermont, receiving the r
resignedly, from Aunt Gerty's hands.

"Perfect, my dear boy. If they'd only giv
'Loungings with his Lordship,' now; or somet
of that sort."

"And now *I'm* in for it, I suppose," si
Clermont, "for half an hour at least? Wha
you do—though, don't have those odious *paille*
riz, in pity's name."

Another time, nothing would have done but
Clermont, resigning his trust to some ready de
should display his correct taste, too, at S
Manning's. Whether the thought crossed hin
he threw himself back in the carriage, and, flac
the air with his whip, kept alternately casting
patient glances at a tissue-paper bonnet-mod
Miss Manning's shop-front, and then at a b
of candles hanging on a nail in Ephraim Ghri
opposite, we cannot tell; but it was evident
mont Onslow never passed a heavier half-hou

Selina Manning's than on that occasion; and when Annie and Aunt Gerty, beaming with joy, made their re-appearance, it was at least two minutes before he could find it in his heart to respond, as he was bound to do, and with his usual cheerfulness to their overflowing mirth.

Well, the round of calls at last over, it cost Tom and Jerry but little time or trouble to make their salutations, as well as their mistress, to old Ben at the 'Cottage,' who loved to see their "dear old faces," as he called them, "as much as his own children's." This, we have every reason for believing, Master Tom and Master Jerry knew perfectly well without his telling them, to judge by their evident eagerness to look Ben up whenever they got a chance. Usually, Master Tom and Master Jerry were invited round into the back yard, there to have a confidential chat with Ben about old times, and a bit of something to eat and drink besides. But, it happening to-day that Aunt Gertrude was "in a desperate hurry and couldn't wait a moment," there was to be no invitation given, which seemed to harmonize by no means with Master Jerry's notions; who, indignant at such treatment, did his best to prove it by all sorts of significant hints, such as reproachfully tossing his head, shaking his ears, and, finding nothing avail, at last trying to drag Tom and chaise and all away, *nolentes volentes*, whether

they would or not; till, Annie and Aunty m
their appearance, Master Jerry was oblige
smother his resentment, and, though still excee
fractious notwithstanding Lucy Onslow's coaxin
let them take their seats at last, while Ben
Clermont to clip some sprigs of jessamine
clematis to decorate their bridles with.

And here we have to record most ungentle
and unwarrantable conduct on the part of Je
particular. How it happened that so clever a
as Aunt Gertrude should have been so ne
we hardly know, but Master Jerry seemed to
very well; for, feeling his head free, we su
while Aunt Gerty and Annie were exch
farewells with Lucy Onslow, and waiting for B
Clermont to make haste with the bridle favo
down he suddenly dropped it almost to his
and, having succeeded in jerking the reins
Aunt Gerty's hand, and making Tom every
mischievous as himself—off they started—
headlong down the road—and, Clermont's and
shouts and rapidly following footsteps after
adding speed to their flight, frantically the
along, till it seemed a miracle only that co
terpose to save them from destruction.

Aunt Gertrude was a woman of strong n
and well on that eventful day that she was,
never could have had power to prevent Anni

throwing herself out, and killing herself, in all probability, on the spot. But the blood at last began to forsake even Aunt Gertrude's cheeks, and her lips to quiver—when, approaching at a hand-gallop across the heath, she saw a post-carriage making for the high-road, a collision with which—and it appeared, in her terror, inevitable—must crush them to a certainty. Still, she kept her seat, holding fast the cold wrist of Annie, who sat like a marble statue, with one hand, and grasping tight the rail of the carriage with the other. 'Twas a moment of fearful and indescribable agony! Aunt Gertrude would have screamed, or made some sign to arrest the attention of the post-boy, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and she dared not let go Annie's hand. Merciful God! what would become of them? The reins hung in fragments about the wheels. Finding themselves nearing their home—faster and faster tore Tom and Jerry. The valley hid them for a moment from the moor. Up again, quick as lightning, to the hill top—and not fifty yards were between them, apparently, and destruction; when suddenly—and how often it is, in this life of momentarily shifting chances and changes, that the hand of Providence comes to snatch us from the yawning jaws of death at the last moment, when we think all hope is over,—the chaise door was

thrown open, and a gentleman, whom Aunt G
trude instantly recognised to be Lord Fitzherb
leaped into the road, and, throwing wide his a
and flourishing the stick he carried in his hand
Tom and Jerry would have rushed sidelong past h
caused Jerry to wheel so far on one side as to th
the carriage up against the bank; when, afte
desperate struggle for it, securing his head—tho
he was dragged some distance before he had redu
him to submission, and terribly sprained his left
in the attempt—Cecil stood absolute master of
field—and ready to receive the full measure of
reward due to his intrepid gallantry and prowess.

Nor, if speaking looks more eloquent than
words, and half-ejaculated heart offerings de
and fuller of speechless gratitude than the m
glowing language could give utterance to, had
meaning—could Lord Fitzherbert, at that mom
have possibly desired a happier lot? How strang
things fall out in this life!

"Who would have thought," said Aunt Gertru
as Clermont came pale and breathless up, follo
by Ben as fast as his old legs would carry him,
without a drop of blood in his old weather-bea
cheeks; "who would have thought of such a f
rencontre as this?"—and, spite of her heroic stoici
Annie's eyes were not the only ones gushing with te
that could no longer be suppressed. And the raptur

greetings between the cousins—what could kindred heart have possibly yearned for more?

"I cannot but feel," said Cecil, the first emotions vented, "that I have made my *entrée* at the Vicarage under great advantages. It is the first time in my life that I can, from my heart, congratulate myself on being *really* fortunate!"

A sweet appreciating smile through Annie's tears was all her answer; but, if it amply satisfied Cecil, Clermont, in all conscience, could not be envious—seeing that those soft sweet blue eyes had probably never smiled more on either, but for him whom they now sought to thank, as she alone knew how to thank, where words were wanting.

Here, indeed, was a first *rencontre!* as Aunt Gertrude said—here a tale to tell—here a subject for never-ending congratulations and acknowledgments—here an ever-recurring theme for mutual sympathies, and praises, and thanksgivings! Truly, as Cecil said, "his first entry into Marksbury was propitious for him." And when, arrived on the parsonage lawn, the Vicar took him to his heart, not only as his pupil, but as the preserver, under Heaven, of his child and sister; and Esther Lawton, good soul! not content with pressing his hand to her lips, and bathing it with her tears—threw herself in a paroxysm of maternal joy and gratitude on his shoulder and wept aloud; while Annie, by the force of example we suppose, joined in

chorus; and Clermont and Aunt Gerty stood v
hearts too full a great deal to find adeq
words to give utterance to their feelings,—had
been an eye-witness, sympathizing reader, of
most interesting scene, we feel sure you would
thought so, too.

"You will find our life at Marksbury," said
Vicar, after the first overflow of feelings had
sided somewhat, "rather different to what you
been accustomed to."

"And for that reason," replied Cecil, "I
quite sure it will have for me its greatest charm."

"At all events," rejoined the Vicar, "we can
you what, though with the Serpentine and H
Park at your elbow, you cannot get in
Street."

"Yes, indeed," said Aunt Gerty, drying her
tear; "and plenty other good things besides he
blows, home-made bread and butter, new milk n
and morning from the cow, whip-syllabubs, and
the slipper, I can tell you."

"Get those in Hill Street?" laughed Cecil;
should think not!"

"There we do beat you, don't we?" glo
Esther. "But, to tell the truth, I was ter
afraid you would find it a little dull and poking
you, at first, at the parsonage, after London; thou
to be sure, we can give you a breath of sweet fresh

something wholesome to eat and drink, if we nothing else."

Had I been such a booby as to have thought so," Cecil, looking round him delightedly, and taking a glance the whole little domain—and then his resting on Aunt Gerty and Annie as he went " all I can say is, and say sincerely, I should have most agreeably mistaken. You have, indeed, a retreat here!"

It *is* pretty, is it not?" smiled Aunt Gerty.

The sweetest spot I think I ever saw in my exclaimed Cecil, warmly.

Are you fond of the country?" asked Annie.

Of all things—if such as Marksbury."

If you have an eye for the picturesque," said the r, " we can offer you some choice treats here- its, can't we Clermont?"

Ah! the 'Cuyp,'—indeed we can," agreed mont. "You have brought your fly-tackle, of se? We hear you know something of the 'gentle ;' and, now the Hatherleys have gone, there will some good shooting, too, over Fernleigh."

"Oh yes, Chevalier has fitted us out famously," ponded Cecil. "Though, I hear Master Leete ves little to be required on that score."

"I'm afraid you didn't get things very comfortable Braybrook?" inquired Esther.

"On the contrary—David's beds and breakf were capital! He had never slept sounder."

And here seeming a graceful opportunity for introduction of the author-artist, Cecil—perhap prove to the Vicar his pictorial skill—gave su graphic sketch of their Braybrook meeting—the t catching—and, then, such points of their scra together across to Copsedenne as he thought w be most interesting,—that nothing would do Esther but that he should then and there "pro them faithfully to write that very night to Co denne, and put the Vicarage and all that it conta at the service of Walter Pemberton, Esq., when and for as long as, he would do them the plea to consider it his own."

"And, so, you really do mean," asked Gertrude, making a move towards the house, " you think you can manage to exist among u Marksbury? Well, we'll try to do our And, as a proof of it—Mr. Clermont you wil pleased to remember, the first bell will be rin presently, and just look at the pickle we are Lord Fitzherbert will be glad, I am sure, to and put himself into fit trim for such a pai critical brown eyes as are coming from Grange to-day—to see what sort of wonderful sonage from May Fair we've got among us."

"Oh! is that it?" laughed Cecil. "Very

me, Clermont. We must try and pass muster. very kind, indeed, of you to tell me."

Things do happen strangely sometimes in this as Cecil Fitzherbert said to himself, when, at in possession of his rooms, he bethought self, as he gazed on all the new and pleasing cts by which he was surrounded, of the events he last two hours,—and, moreover, of the most ming waistcoat he should wear that evening. idea of his first *entrée* at the Vicarage had ghed rather heavily for some while on his mind, in e of the reputed beauty of its chief attraction,— eing the likely introduction to a state of things the most congenial with his Lordship's tastes and ts. Now, the cloud had passed away, and ything looked bright and beautiful! He could lly believe he was in the land of strangers. It ned quite a home to him already. He thought ad never seen a grey-haired pastor who came up is notions of what a country pastor ought to be, Lancelot Lawton. Esther, too, was all a parson's should be—no pretence—no puffed-up self- ortance—no high-flown airs—no sour sanctity— guile, or gammon about her; but a good, kind, ng, hospitable, easy sort of an old creature—he d her exceedingly! As for Aunt Gertrude, she a non-such! Had an eye as sharp as a needle, a thorough good heart at bottom, he could see

that. And Clermont, a good, simple, well-mean
sort of fellow enough for a quiet evening; not b
looking, either, at all—but a bit of a spooney. K
no more of life than his mother. And Annie—
George!—she was an angel! What could his mo
have been thinking of to say, 'she was well eno
for a country beauty?' By Heaven! she
perfection!"—and Cecil Fitzherbert went on c
placently with his toilet. "He thought—nay he k
—he felt—he was sure—quite sure—he shoul
happy—happy as the day was long! How ple
his mother would be, and dear old Vaughan.
must mind, though, what he said about Annie
by Jove! they'd take fright. Gad! compare A
with Emma Sommersley? Money be hanged!—
didn't make a woman;"—and, snatching up
waistcoat he had just taken off, out dropped Be
little *souvenir* of affection at his feet. "Confo
it!"—cried he, "there's the bell—I shall be late
George!" and, picking up the *souvenir*, he bun
it, together with a host of things strewed about
floor, into a trunk; and, the finishing touches c
pleted, and looking handsomer, and feeling, perh
happier than he had ever felt before, he descen
full of spirits, notwithstanding his sprained arm
the drawing-room; where, we need scarcely
there were nothing but smiles, and sweetest ones,
there waiting to welcome him on every side.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HEART'S-EASE AND HEART-ACHE.

"WELL, what think you, love, of my Lord herbert?" asked Aunt Gertrude; when, after pleasant an evening as was ever spent in the sonage drawing-room, which is saying no little, nty dear followed her niece into her room, to have minutes chat, as usual, before wishing good-ht.

"Oh, exceedingly agreeable!" replied Annie, tak- a side view of herself from head to foot in Psyche; "don't you think so, Aunty?"

"Charming love! You behaved beautifully! I s quite proud of you."

"I am sure I sung that air from the *Somnambule* retchedly!" said Annie. "I was so frightened. Home Sweet Home' would have been in better aste. Do you know, I think Manning must alter the kirt—it droops a little on this side?"

"The least bit in the world. Yes, now I lo
it does, a little, love."

"And didn't you think," continued Annie,
made a shocking mess of the *Fra Diavolo* w
Rosalie?"

"A little timid only at first, dear. It will do
good to play more before company. You
through the *Fantaisie Brillante* capitally! Y
only want confidence."

"Ah! I am so much braver when you are
my side," returned Annie, unloosing her hair,
throwing it back from her face till it hung in lu
riant clusters down her neck and shoulders,
gave to her face an expression irresistibly lovely.
do think I never heard you play so well as to-nig
Aunty dear."

"And don't you think my silk *barège* a beau
too?" exclaimed Aunty, approaching the glass,
turning round and round to take in every point.
do. Do you know, love, I'm in two minds whet
I shan't have my pale-blue satinet made up; a
then, if we go to Castlemore, shan't we cut a das
You're to have the worked muslin, with the blue a
silver ribbons—that's decided—so, set your heart
rest about that, darling."

"Do you think we really shall go to Castlemore
asked Annie.

"Certainly, if Lady Fitzherbert spend the autu

ere, which Cecil—remember we are never again, u know, to call him Lord Fitzherbert, unless we e angry with him—which Cecil says he is sure e will. He is going to write to-morrow all about "

"That would be delightful, wouldn't it?" cried nie. "Then we should see Bella Gordon. I do long to see Bella."

"So do I, dear. Cecil says we shall love her ectly. She's all heart; and as good as beautiful."

"I am sure I shall love her," said Annie. "And very, very beautiful, too!"

"So Cecil says. She must have rare merit to ase such a connoisseur as Cecil Fitzherbert."

"She is very dark, is she not?" asked Annie, sing her eyes to her own in the glass.

"Almost as himself, I believe," if not quite, dear. But Emma Sommersley is more what I should ve fancied would have been his taste—from his narks on 'The Book of Beauties."

"I thought Lady Emma was not considered beau-l," said Annie; "but very graceful, and accom-shed, and very rich!"

"I could not get Cecil to tell me what he thought, ve. But one thing I noticed."

"What, Aunty dear?"

"That Cecil was very fervent, indeed, to Clermont, Bella's praises."

"Indeed!" said Annie. "Well?"

"Well—that's all I know, love. I shouldn't wonder, *entre nous*, if Clermont admired Bella very much."

"Why, Aunty dear?"

"O, men are such oddities! They generally prefer decided contrasts for their favourites."

There was something in this speech of Aunt Gerty's, that, while it gratified in one way, seemed not to quite harmonize with Miss Annie's ideas in the other; and for a moment or two she continued her *déshabilement* in silence.

"Do you think Cecil Fitzherbert handsome?" asked Aunty, arranging the flounce of her dress.

"Very," said Annie.

"As a model, of its class, I should say, too, his features are almost faultless, darling. But there's an expression, when at rest—when not animated by conversation—that I thought—as I looked at him once or twice when Rosalie Bainbridge was singing 'Alice Gray,'—would, were I his wife, make me fear as much as love him. They say he'll be the image of his father—a man of iron will, with all his softness; of captious, capricious temper; and who could hate fiercely, if he could love fondly."

"I think his arm pained him more than he chose to own," reminded Annie. "I saw him turn pale several times while he was talking to papa about Castlemore. Rosalie thinks him perfection!"

ust the sort of face and figure to suit her
to a T, love; the realization of what Lizzy
er's book-shelves have pictured to her as the
ideal of what a beau ought to be, ever since,
poor Rosie! was in her teens. But I think—
ng Huntworth out of the question, love—I
a face she—at heart—admires more."
You don't think Lord Fitzherbert—Cecil, I beg
ardon—" asked, Annie, "amiable, then?"
O yes! very, indeed, love—when he's pleased."
Not so amiable as his cousin Clermont, you
der, Aunty?"
O dear! don't talk such nonsense. As well
me if Waddle there, with all my love for him,
specimen—is as large hearted—as brave—as
e—as generous—as unselfish as your old Nep,
homage to a mite of a thing like that—for
worth no more to be compared together than
pinchbeck scent bottle is with solid gold, my
test?"
gain Annie was silent while you might have
ted fifty.
All Clermont wants," resumed Aunt Gerty, "is
e more of life."
That is all," agreed Annie. "He is such a noble-
ted, kind, generous, sensible fellow!—but—"
Eclipsed by the side of his courtly cousin? Yes,
; and where's the wonder with the sort of life

he leads at Marksbury? We must have so serious talk with his mother about him. Th must be some fascination keeps him so tied to us the parsonage. It must, and shall be unridd and put to rights, love. I can tell him, if he mea pop the question to Aunt Gertrude, he must m haste about it, with such odds against him; or A Gerty must pop the question herself—and so I sh inform him."

"Eclipsed or not," said Annie, "he seemed high spirits enough, didn't he, with Rosalie to-nig He hardly favoured me all the evening with a wo

"And, yet, how he strove to shine, poor boy! whose eyes, really now, I wonder?"

"Could any two eyes be possibly more devot his own to-night," asked Annie, trying to unt knot in her sandal—"than Rosalie's?"

"Yes; and he deserves a good scolding for darling! If he thinks I'll be neglected after fashion, he's very much mistaken."

"And you really believe—really and truly?" as Annie, smiling, as Aunty took her candle, and, lo ing at her watch, declared they would neither them have any roses for the morning, if they did make haste and go and try and find them—"you believe we shall all of us go to Castlemore?"

"Yes, dearest; but don't, in pity's name, tell p Rosalie."

"And why not, pray?"

"Why not, you ninny? Why, can't you see the
or girl is up to her ears in jealousy already about
la's black eyes. Would you break her little
rt outright?"—and, exchanging sweetest kisses,
nie was left alone, to commune with her own
rt and interpret Aunt Gerty's parting warning as
pleased her. For hour after hour Annie con-
ed to ponder and interpret; till, getting into such
eb of perplexities, that the only possibility of
icating herself was to fall fast asleep and forget
l—she took one more faint glimpse of Rosalie
bridge's hovering form—and, with a sweet smile
armony with all the world, slept Annie Lawton
night, tranquil and happy in spirit as the
ls that watched over her.

ut there were other gentle spirits besides Annie
ton and Aunt Gertrude's gone to their repose
ath the parsonage roof that night, for whose
munings, in the silence and solitude of their
nbers, we feel an interest. So, let us cross
gallery, and, with the "open sesame" at our
mand, gain admittance not only into his Lord-
of Castlemore's little snuggery, but likewise into
most secret mind and heart workings, if we can;
t length dismissed from good Esther Lawton's
ds, and her rum-possets and rubefacients, and all

the other wonder-working mysteries of her medic
chest, he gave himself up to the soothing influe
of the soft, silent hour, and of the agreeable t
of reflections it very naturally brought with it.

How the heart, predetermined to be satisf
invests every object offered for its gratificat
with the sweetest charms! And, with an eye t
at that moment saw only what was charming
every thing that met its gaze, Cecil Fitzherb
made a more attentive survey of the pains
had been evidently taken to make his new h
all that kindness could well think of to render
complete. Two rooms, communicating with b
windows, and enjoying delicious views as far
they went, had been expressly appropriated,
tastefully filled up with many additional little c
forts and elegancies under the direction of A
Gertrude and Annie, for his special use. The ro
were not large, nay, the dormitory was a fu
little affair; but there was an air of comfort
elegance throughout, and a harmony of tone
all, that were worth a thousand of more sp
without them, and which Cecil would not
then have exchanged for the best state bed-ro
in Windsor Castle. A cottage trellis-paper cove
the walls, with never-fading roses and jessami
all a blowing to the heart's content; a moss-patt

ussels carpet the floors, and pretty pink-lined
ntz curtains, to correspond, adorned the windows;
l, for the rest, let Annie and Aunt Gerty alone
leaving anything to be done after them, where
had a mind to show their skill. So, no wonder,
n Cecil had completed his inspection, and dotted
thing down in his memory for the promised
erreotype, he should, giving himself up to all
uxury of self-complacency, and conjuring up all
of joys and triumphs in prospect, have felt
surer, if possible, than he did before dinner,
e should be happy as, aye happier than, the
as long; and, so feeling, have fallen into some
like the following train of pleasant musings.
t pains evidently had been taken to make
ppy! He should like to know whose hands
ranged that stand of choice flowers,"—and
g to do homage to a sweet-scented china-rose
too roughly—it was shattered by the touch,
s petals lay scattered on the floor. Picking
up, one by one, and carefully placing them
n the leaves of a volume of Tom Moore,—
that's how it is with what we love best," said
Why should not what is beautiful and be-
last as long as what is ugly and uncared-for?
is that stiff, stuck-up tulip there, that's
ed to show its face by candle-light—I might
ancied, and fondled *it*, as much as I pleased,

and done it no hurt. I did not love it—and th
it is—uninjured—whole as ever! Ah, sweet rose

"I knew, I knew it could not last—
'Twas bright, 'twas heavenly, but 'tis past!
Oh! ever thus from childhood's hour,
I've seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But 'twas the first to fade away.
* * * *
Now too—the joy most like divine
Of all I ever dreamt or knew,
To see thee, hear thee, call thee mine,—
Oh misery! must I lose *that*, too?"

And, pacing the room backward and forward
some moments, Cecil Fitzherbert seemed lost
the reverie his poetical reminiscences had induc
But impressions, whether for weal or woe, w
usually short-lived with Lord Fitzherbert. In p
portion as you are not the slave of feeling, you ha
the best chance of being serenely happy, was Nug
Harvey's doctrine, to which he acted up pre
strictly in all his dealings, and which he had su
ceeded in instilling deep enough, as a fundamen
principle of thought and action, into his pupi
mind. In less than five minutes, the fate of t
rose was to Cecil Fitzherbert's thoughts as if
had never happened. And, then, he examin
more closely the old prints Aunt Gertrude a

mont had rummaged out from the great closet, and hung about the walls. They mostly of a rural character, with two or from designs by Watteau, illustrative of simple pleasures of a country life. Cecil, gh really an ardent admirer of the arts, and ng enjoyed opportunities from long residence in during the early part of his life of acquiring iderable knowledge of them, could not call to his d at that instant anything he had ever seen that filled his heart with so much joy as the oreland' he was contemplating, and its companion t to it. "They were enough to make any one, h a grain of nature in them, turn sick at the ught of Park Lane and Chesterfield House. ere was something so pure, so innoeent, so nquillizing, yet so elevating, in nature. He thought could pitch his tent and live for ever in Marksbury;" d, leaving the 'Morelands;'—"what an exquisite n-cushion, too, on his toilet table, with his arms d initials in cipher—that was Annie Lawton's ing he'd bet a thousand! And that curious old laid cabinet, loaded with rare old books, and orcelain, and curiosities—Clermont had been at ork there, he could see that in a moment. And ne old vellum-bound Bible—by the by, that put him n mind, he must have a look, too, at his mother's;— nd what a rum sort of a clock on the mantlepiece!

two bronze mad bulls, tossing old Time with his s
and dial up to the moon ;—and the old Dresden v
and the peacock's-tail match pots; and the
bedstead with its dimity-hangings and ball fi
white as driven snow,—everything did look,
smell, and feel so clean, and fresh, and w
some—so different from that horrid London,
Nugent Harvey's stuffy, stifling show rooms;"—
Lord Fitzherbert, yawning, began to think wh
it was not almost time he went to bed; and, th
ing himself into an easy chair, commenced
necessary process to that end. "What on
could the Vicar wish for more than Marksbury
was all the heart could desire, this side of Hea
just the sweet retreat where the weary spirit, tir
its warfare with the world, its vanities and
glories, would wing its flight. Capital shooting,
and fishing, Clermont said. Would astonish
weak mind! Not a bad fellow, though, Cler
Onslow—and decidedly good looking. Forehead
nose, perfect—pleasant smile—but not fire en
in the eye. All heart and above board, any
could see that. No craft in Clermont. Gull
easy enough! All sham, though, that, with Ro
Bainbridge—sweet on Annie, sure as his name
Cecil; twigged that the first moment they met,
and, wrapped apparently in deep meditation, L
Fitzherbert sat motionless for some minutes.

That Aunt Gertrude was a sharp one!" mentally
inued his Lordship; "couldn't get at her at all.
mont all right there. Poh! slyer fishes than
ty Gerty, tickled till they were caught. Love me,
my dog;" and, seemingly tickled himself with
thought, Cecil smiled as it crossed him. "Divine
ture, Annie Lawton! what an expression in
e heavenly eyes! Bella's were beautiful—perhaps
e lustrous—but not so tender. Bella's a spirit
ething like his own—passionate—deeply passionate
impetuous; and could hate—yes, hate—intensely,
ly hate, as well as love. Annie, she looked as
e could hate nothing—as if she were all love, and
cence, and artlessness, made to shed nothing but
e and joy on all around her. And, when she
ed—how angelic! By George! she would be a
match for a duke. If Sam forgot the flower
erns, he'd kick him. Hoped his mother had
ght handsome ones. Must love botany, he
that. Wondered how she'd like the paint box
crayons, he had brought her? Wished they had
n better, now. Thought Bella would be sure to
e it all right with his mother about the money.
a doubt of it—she was a brick of a girl! Must
e to her. His mother must and should go to
tlemore this summer. Knew it wasn't a place
ever liked; but it was a duty debt she owed—
st put Bella to work again about it. Bella

could do anything with her. Altogether, he thou
as a matter of fancy, he preferred light wome
dark, as long as they weren't too fat, or m
That was the worst of *blondes*—they were ap
come to the *full-blown* rather fast. Not a
them, though; for his mother was a blonde, or n
so; and look at her now—would beat nineteen
of twenty women—not one half her age;" with v
filial reflection, Cecil Fitzherbert laid his hea
his pillow; and, keeping his eyes on the ball-frin
his bed curtain, as long as they would remain
and wondering if Bella would make it all right
his mother about the money—and whether he
kneel morning and evening at prayers as the
did—confounded nuisance that rather!—at last
Annie, his Lordship sunk into repose; but wh
his dreams were as calm and happy as that
angel's, with her parting thoughts in peace
harmony with all the world—as well as with he
heart, is more than we can take upon oursel
say, and, therefore, hazard no remarks about it.

Far other thoughts than even she, who sup
herself the repository of his every care and
imagined, had attended the Vicar to his
on that memorable night. Lancelot Lawton's
never very unobservant eyes of the things that
around him. He saw, and clearly too, often
he seemed least to be wide awake. Witho

ing to have an eye or interest for anything
ond what met every one else's observation as
as his own that evening, there was not a look
word that fell from Cecil, that he did not care-
note, and know the real, full nature and pur-
of far better, in truth, than Cecil Fitzherbert,
all his cleverness and subtlety, did himself.
t the precise current the Vicar's thoughts took
night when he went to his slumbers with the
as he did not see fit to make it known even to
bosom which, before all, was entitled to his
confidence, it is not for us to discover, if we
. No doubt, flowing on in its natural channel,
ll hereafter, in the usual course, find its level;
then, it will be time enough to trace it, if we
e to take the trouble, to its source; though
ner the examination will be worth the labour, is
tter we must leave entirely to the discretion of
ader.

Well, I think first impressions are so far favour-
decidedly, to-day," said Lancelot to Esther
on, before he closed his eyes in sleep. "Lord
erbert really seem to like us, and his new
passing well."

f we can only get the arm in a sling for a day
o," responded Esther; "and I can persuade him
e the camomiles—"

He is grown remarkably like his father," ob-

served the Vicar, "his very counterpart. Let's
—it will be about eighteen months, won't it, be
he takes Castlemore? Well, he may do a good
by then—to fetch up lost time?"

"I hope and trust," said Esther, "he will d
every drop of the whey. He promised me he wo
You know what it did for you—what a deal of g
last winter, when you took that terrible cold at B
Gibbs' funeral?"

"I think I never saw a finer cast of countenan
said the Vicar, "than Lord Fitzherbert's."

"And didn't you think Annie looked charmin
her sprigged muslin?" asked Esther. "I fancy
must give her a new silk, for dinner dress. I
thinking of a pale blue. She's got a peach-bloss
though they say, they're making the sleeves
smaller. But that—with the shot-lilac—and her w
will do very well for common evenings. And w
Gerty goes over to Roxberry, she has promise
buy her—which I think will look so genteel
pretty—one of the new worked muslins, for eve
full dress—trimmed—"

But the Vicar giving audible symptoms
nature could no more,—the trimming of An
evening full-dress had to stand over; and reca
the various inventories of her different frocks
she was fifteen—every one of which was, we ma
sure, indelibly registered in her memory, ende

her recollection by fadeless blissful associations—
ther Lawton, at last, followed her husband's ex-
ple; though not before he had twice exclaimed to
nself, almost loud enough to be overheard,—"Yes,
looked lovely!—There is no danger.—'Twill be
e enough to avoid it—when there is any."

And now it but remains for us to take a peep into
other chamber of the Parsonage, as presented to
view on that busy night of head and heart-com-
nings; where, tossing restless on his bed, lay
rmont Onslow, the sole member, as far as we
w of, of that happy little circle, to whose eyelids
p seemed determined to be wooed in vain. Why
t not Clermont Onslow? If a good conscience
a healthy frame were all that was necessary, his
nbers should have been of the soundest and the
etest—sound and sweet as his next door neigh-
r, Annie's own. Yet, there he lay feverish and
t ease, like one that looked dreadingly on the
ning of the morrow. What could have driven
peace from his heart, which, till that night had
r deserted before? Could it have been the in-
ence in an extra glass of Esther's brewing, to
memorate the arrival of his cousin Cecil among
n? On a healthy frame like Clermont's, much
e than that would have been required to rob him
wink. Or, had Rosalie Bainbridge's peering
ces penetrated deeper than they had ever done

before? Or, is it possible there could have been a little pique, or jealousy in the case, on Annie's count? Surely, Clermont Onslow was too no minded, to have lain awake three moments for a such 'rubbish!' as Aunt Gerty would have called Then, what could it have been that kept him with eyes wide open, and a heavy weight at his he that, do what he would, he could not shake o Could it have been that foolish gipsy-song that haunted him night and day—seeming, somehow, separably connected with every mention of cousin?—those strange, doleful words he would h given worlds to have banished from his memory

"Why comes he hither so far to bring
Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?
Why wearies he thus his pretty wing,
Cannot he stop at home and sing
His cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?"

"Maiden, the poor bird will tell the best—
Hark! cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo—
There mourning the loss of his rifled nest,
Why hither he comes to enjoy his rest,
With his cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?"

It might have been. We have known cau quite as, seemingly, insignificant, rob the he otherwise without an ache or care, of its righ rest; when a word—O that balsamic word in sea

how precious is it!—one single word, spoken and responded to as it might perhaps, and would, have been in Clermont Onslow's case, would have scattered the bugbear to the winds, and made it the next moment laugh heartily at its own weakness and absurdity. But that potent talisman lacked Clermont the knowledge, or the inclination, just then, to profit by; or all the gipsies in Hampshire might have croaked their doleful ditties in his ear, and, like Aunt Gerty, he would have gaily snapped his fingers, and slept safe and sound, too, as a top.

Strange, wayward, unaccountable organ the human heart! For its deepest wounds and bitterest sorrows how often has it the precious talisman within its grasp that would heal its every anguish; but it cannot, or it will not be its own physician. It can see, and employ the soothing balsam for others' griefs; but seemingly, has not the knowledge, or the inclination to apply one drop with which to assuage its own. Poor human heart! In thy solicitude, then most distrust thyself—thy own resources. Go, when trouble wrings thee, and, instead of shutting thyself up in thyself, pour all thy cause of lamentation into the bosom of some echoing soul; and if then thou art not comforted—there is yet a source of solace left, if sought—the fountain source, O troubled heart!—the source that never fails!

CHAPTER XX.

THE DAGUERREOTYPE.

When Cecil Fitzherbert woke, which was no
considerably after the Parsonage usual breal
hour, his arm was so painful that he could ha
raise it to his head. Not hearing him a-stir, ha
dozen times had the Vicar, and then Esther Law
and then Jennings—we humbly crave his pardo
Mr. Jennings, the butler, as he was called in
village,—crept, quiet as mice, to his Lordship's d
to listen; till, at length, Esther remembering
there were strong narcotic properties in the w
posset she had concocted for the night draught,
that her patient would very likely to prefer ha
breakfast that morning in his own room—her h
was on the knob of the tea-urn, when his bell ru
and up hastened Jennings, followed by his mist
to the stair-head, to minister with all due alacrit
his Lordship's wants.

Partly dressed, and enveloped in a superb summer *robe-de-chambre*, Lord Fitzherbert was sitting up in bed when Jennings entered.

"His Lordship had overslept himself. Hadn't slept so well, for he couldn't remember how long. Supposed it was the country air, and quiet; or the rum-punch—it was capital!"

"Mr. Jennings was delighted."

"His Lordship's arm still pained him a good deal; seemed, he thought, more swollen. Would Jennings have the kindness to look?—stay—his Lordship would draw his arm out.—By George!—that hurt him rather, though."

"Mr. Jennings was concerned beyond expression! Had he not better go for Dr. Dunlop?"

"Lord Fitzherbert thought not. Perhaps Mrs. Lawton would step up presently? Had perfect faith in her hands. Confound the doctors!"

"Mr. Jennings was not partial to them himself. His Lordship of course would take tea—not coffee?"

"Tea. Stay—"

"If his Lordship preferred chocolate—or cocoa?"

"No—tea, he thought. Would thank Jennings to look into the top drawer there, and give him a clean handkerchief. The *millefleur* was somewhere on the table, or in that trunk in the corner there. Fine day, wasn't it?"

"Heavenly weather for the harvest! His Lord would like some eggs and broiled chicken?"

"Anything. His Lordship was not partic Thought he should feel all right after his break An egg — yes — and the broiled chicken— well."

Radiant with smiles, Mr. Jennings hastene deliver himself of his message, and to get Lordship's breakfast.

"The shoulder more swollen, is it?" rep Esther Lawton, hurrying up stairs. "Dear me feared as much. Then, we must put the leeche that's positive! And mind they're ready—and fresh healthy ones, tell Humphrey."

"His Lordship will have his breakfast *fi* presumed Jennings.

"We shall see. Perhaps, if there's no fe thought Esther. "And tell Hopkins to have plen hot water ready. And, if Dr. Dunlop come in, I see him before he goes—mind that."

"His Lordship would not have the Doctor fetc hesitated Jennings.

"We shall see about that," snapped up Es sharply,—and, in another minute, Esther La was in her element—robbing Dr. Dunlop of lawful perquisites.

Would you have made Esther Lawton

happy, you had but to place her by the bed of sickness. There she felt at home, was in her element, and the only fee she wanted was unconditional faith in and surrender to her wondrous skill. These granted, and you might, had you needed them, consumed buckets-full of her spiced possets, and lain incased from head to foot in strengthening plasters, and she never had wearied of brewing the one, or, as long as leather lasted, spreading the other, *con amore*. Things are much altered in these respects now a-days, within the last ten years immensely altered, and by no means for the better, that we can see, in our pastoral districts. Now, Master Hobbs and Dame Durkin, if Giles or Dolly's got the 'rheumatis,' can run up to Lunnon, or across to Roxberry in no time—and "care nothing, not they, whether they've got any hearts for the poor, they great, grand, rich folks at the Parsonage, or not. Thank Almighty! they is hindependent on 'em there, anyhow." And, perhaps, say the great, grand, rich folks, too, "thank Almighty! we be independent likewise, as well as you." 'Tis a fast-growing partnership affair in merry England, that independent system between rich and poor, which, the sooner it is dissolved, we fancy will be the better for them both. Independent partnerships 'twixt rich and poor are getting more and more the fashion every day. It may seem

paradoxical, but so do many other precious signs
the times that puzzle one to know the rhyme
reason of. For our own part, had we been b
ridden with the "rheumatis," or any other aches
ailments within reach of the old Parsonage,
should have preciously hugged ourselves in
thought of the spiced possets and warm plaste
and as soon thought of flying as of an independ
partnership concern with Esther Lawton. Go wh
you will, now a days, we are all so independent.
really passes all belief to see how monomaniacally s
reliant we are getting. Independent parents,
independent children; independent masters,
independent servants; independent husbands,
independent wives—independent beds, and indep
dent boards; independent churches, and independ
chapels; independent creeds, and independent c
gregations; independent justice, and independ
journalism; independent radicalism, and independ
roguery; independent representatives, and indep
dent constituents; independent promises, and
dependent performances; independent incomi
and independent outgoings—there is no end to
The only comfort is—there will be no independ
heavens, we trust, as well as independent earth
otherwise, the look out for your poor depende
would be hopeless!

Faith, a most independent, conceited, coxy li

race we Great Britishers! We pride ourselves on it. Each a host is in himself. It's not a little will take the shine out of us. We won't be humbled! All beef, beer, bone and muscle, wooden walls and Wellingtons for ever—what do we care? A lesson, indeed, of late, enough to teach us? Pshaw! Beat a true Briton? *Monsieur—vous êtes trop vif.* Do not delude yourself, *Monsieur*. Your's is a great nation, second to none in Europe. Your army is splendid; your soldiers can fight; your organization is admirable; you behaved really heroically at Sebastopol, *Monsieur*—we admit it—there you did great things! But please not to forget, we pray you, Waterloo! We can afford, *Monsieur*, to be generous, and we are so. We ever were independent, *Monsieur*, though. And *Monsieur*, you will please to be respectful—we are Britons.

But there seemed no intention on the part of Lord Fitzherbert to be independent, with his disabled arm, of good Esther Lawton; who, standing for a moment to scan the countenance of her patient as she entered the room in true Æsculapian style, made it perfectly clear in a moment to his Lordship, that the wisest thing he could do just then was not only to be sensible of his wants, but grateful to anybody or anything that would best provide against them.

"Ah! you are ashamed of me, I can see," cried

Lord Fitzherbert, pressing the helping hand held to him.—

"'Tis the voice of the sluggard, I hear him complain
You have wak'd me too soon, I must slumber again

"No—no, you did very right! Am so though, we didn't put the leeches on last ni smiled Esther, taking a seat by the bed-side, feeling the pulse. "No fever—that's a blessing! slept pretty well, you say, all night?"

"Slept—yes,—sound as a rock!"

"Ah! that was the whey-posset. Then you a good boy—and drank every drop of it?"

"Ye— yes," was on his Lordship's lips, "drop;" when his eyes resting on the silver mug st ing on a side table, just as he had put it d untasted, the falsehood fairly stuck in his L ship's throat.

"You naughty fellow!" cried Esther, rising, peeping into the mug; then returning with a grave look to her post.

"Forgot all about it, by George!" excla Cecil—which was true. "Thought I'd forg something. That botheration of unpacking. H nuisance! Should have been all right this mor Serves me just right."

"Have a good mind to send for the Doctor—just to punish you," threatened Esther.

"No, now—pray, don't—don't!" implored Cecil, not for worlds!"

> "Now, do pray forgive me this one little time,
> And I'll never do so any more!"

"Well, I suppose I must," smiled Esther; "but now, let me see the arm—yes, positively."

"If you will hold the cuff, then—*I'll* try and draw it out," groaned Cecil.

"No, no—stay—I can slip it down—so—off the neck—have patience for a moment. There, now—that's capital! Ah!—swollen more—so it is, I declare. That's all because you didn't drink the whey; and because I was overpersuaded, like a booby, about the leeches. But there's no fever—that's a blessing! Let me look at your tongue?—Nothing much the matter with that,"—and Esther sat down again. "If you'd seen as I have, the miracles I may say, that whey-posset has done! The winter when the Vicar took that dreadful cold at Betsy Gibbs' funeral—you'd have thought he must have died. Dunlop could do nothing for him—he was wasted to a skeleton! When I came home from Shropshire—for they wouldn't tell me how ill he was for fear of frightening me—which I do think so foolish,—

when I got home—there he was, poor man!—it heart-breaking to see him—a mere bag of bo and worn, that he was, almost to a thread. I t I never saw such a change—and all in three we There's nothing like a wife, say what they will. tors and servants are all very well, and, poor thi have a good deal to put up with; but there's not at the bed side of sickness, like a wife, and a m —that is, of course, where they know their and are not too fine to do it; and not too fid and fussy—that's a great thing in nursing—n fuss and fidget."

"And the whey-posset, you think?"

"Ask him. He hadn't taken it, no, not two n before—with a nice juicy mutton-chop, or a b tender beef, or a boiled chicken for his dinner, a glass or two—as I insisted, for he was literally s ing himself—the worst plan in the world in cases—say what they will—a glass or two o port, law,—he was no more like the same creatu you should have seen him—no more like the creature—than you, you naughty boy! are like you would have been, if you had done as you told to do."

"A thousand pities, he knew," acknowle Cecil. "Splendid thing, that posset!—there w a question of it."

"And then—there's Jennings—that's another

continued Esther,—"ah! shooting again, the arm, is it?—that shews there's inflammation. Then I must go at once, and see about the chamomiles."

"Some breakfast, he supposed, wouldn't hurt him?" asked Cecil.

Again Esther Lawton consulted the pulse and tongue.

"Are you thirsty?"

"Not at all. But peckish rather."

"A good sign. Well, no—provided you eat sparingly; and promise not to use the arm—not one wee bit—but let Clermont and Jennings get you up by and bye—there is no hurry—and will have patience—and do just as you're told to do—and will wear the sling, mind, that Annie is making you, till you're quite well again,—then, I see no objection to it—in moderation."

"And Miss Lawton really *is* making me a sling, is she?" exclaimed Cecil. "How kind! I declare I feel almost well already."

"You have told Jennings about what you like for breakfast. Very well. And there's the bell, remember, at your side, if you want anything—though, mind, you don't use the arm. And, by and bye, when you've had the arm bathed—we'll see about the leeches. And, then, we'll wheel the sofa round to the window in the other room, if you don't come down, which you had better not,—open the sash, and

let down the shade—and, then, you can have the and a peep of the hills, without fatigue."

"That will be delicious!" said Cecil, gasp "And you will beg of the ladies, too, don't for to take compassion on my loneliness, and com and see all the pretty things I've got for th you promise me?"

"And—if any one call?—perhaps not to-day

"Yes, yes—shew them up. Aunt Gertrude Miss Annie will do the agreeable for me. I only condescend to-day to be *en Grand Seigne* that's understood."

"Very well—we'll come by and bye—and pay dutiful respects to his Highness, rest assured And, by the bye—Clermont shall go and try t some oranges. They do make such a nice, gra addition to the barley-water!"

Lord Fitzherbert "was not particularly fon barley-water."

"What did he like best? If fever should on—it was best to be prepared."

"O, anything. Toast and water—or water was not bad,—such delicious water as they at Marksbury. Not like their London Tha stuff."

Esther Lawton shuddered. She knew a case of a young person who came from her native Laureldale, to London on a visit; and—"

"Ah! dreadful, wasn't it? It made him sick to think of it!"

"Who was all but poisoned by it. Yes, and that was above Battersea, too, where they said it was rather more like wholesome."

Lord Fitzherbert "could perfectly believe it. Soda water wasn't a bad thing at all, either with a dash of hock or sherry in it, was it?"

"*Or, very—very* thin barley water!" said Esther, true to her favourite regimen, "with a little raspberry vinegar in it—that made a beautiful cooling drink?"

"So it did! Lord Fitzherbert forgot that. What a thing it was to have a head in illness! When did the Marksbury post come in?"

"Well, it varied—though it ought not. Tabitha Ludlam was sometimes very tiresome. They ought to get their bag by eight every morning, but they often didn't get it till half-past. There was nothing that day, except the newspaper, but another letter to the Vicar, from The Society for the Relief of poor Distressed Clergymen,—asking, for the third time, about the character—wasn't it dreadful!—of poor Cathfield—just as if he were a footman out of place, or an impostor. It was shocking! What an exposure!—what an indignity to the feelings of an honest man! God help him! Those societies were so long always before they did any good. The remedy was worse than the disease. Poor man! he

was as worthy a creature as ever was in trouble. too large hearted—too indifferent to the w applause, for his own interests. His really was case, if ever there was one. She knew anothe case, too, precisely similar—once—"

But the entrance of Mr. Jennings with the b fast putting a stop to the conversation, the cas Chatfield had to make way; and, once more re ing Cecil that "the bell was within reach," and that nothing was wanting to make Jenning's complete—but some Scotch marmalade, whic should bring up directly, and which she could for being wholesome, as it was made under he eye,—and promised again to deliver his Lord pleasure, touching the grand *levée* that after Esther Lawton bustled down stairs to her ow of tea and buttered roll, and he was left to the enjoyment of his broiled bones.

The breakfast over, and ample justice having done to it—if Esther Lawton's upraised eyes, met Jennings presently after with the empty on the landing, may be taken as any evidence the arm having undergone the necessary bathi the leeches standing at present inoperative o mantle shelf, but in sight, just to show my what he was in for if he didn't obey orders,— Clermont and Jennings having acquitted thems as *valets-de-chambre*, in a manner that made

arrival on that score a matter of no consequence; and the table, chairs, and sofa wheeled round to the bay window in the next room; and the sash thrown up, and the sun-shades let down; and a little round, inlaid, satin and rose-wood claw-table placed at his Lordship's elbow, loaded with grapes, and oranges, and biscuits, and lemonade, and soda-water, and currant-jelly, and a curious old Queen Bess china jug with a silver top and spout and handle to it, containing something that smelt very like barley-water, and which Cecil, peeping into it, insisted on swallowing a whole small tumbler of, while Esther looked on delighted beyond measure;—in a word, nothing being wanted that Grand Seigneur, *indisposé*, could possibly desire; the coast clear of further interruptions; the Vicar, after a long, lively chat, having mounted his cob for a long round; and the ladies, with Clermont, as of course it was a whole holiday, gone to keep a botanical appointment somewhere among the nooks and corners with Rosalie Bainbridge, where his Lordship was to have been initiated in the mysteries, had his arm permitted him,—Lord Fitzherbert, with Jennings' assistance, got out his papers and portfolio; and, having succeeded in satisfying Esther Lawton that his right arm had nothing just then to do with his left—although there was certainly great weight in what she said, touching the intimate fraternal sympathy

that existed often between corresponding men
of the human frame, to share each other's cares
crosses, and which was worthy of a page in
"Medico-Chirurgical Transactions,"—having sat
Esther so far, that, instead of his right arm fe
the remotest sympathy in any shape for his le
could find it in its heart, when he thought of
botanical ramble, to give its brother a precious
hiding, and no mistake—sat down at last compo
to the promised daguerreotype; but not befor
sling had been adjusted to a nicety; and he had
several times, but in vain, to coax Paul and Virg
Annie's favourite pigeons—who, enticed by
biscuit crumbs, came strutting on the window-s
to be on social terms. They would have wa
no second invitation, not they, if Clermont
thrown open his window; but have walked in
enough, and perched upon his shoulder, and pe
the cake from out his lips. True, Clermont did
wear a splendid dressing-gown and a sumptuous
"Grec," or Paul and Virginia had not dared
take such liberties perhaps with him. However
may be, Virginia would not be sociable; and, ha
exhausted his patience, and Paul "rather bothe
him," his Lordship shook his "Grec" tassel at
which, scaring Virginia out of her wits, off flew
after her, leaving his Lordship laughing hearti
his cleverness.

"Capricious minx that," said he, arranging his paper, and dipping his pen in the ink,—"she will, and she won't. Like them all—when they can't, they will, when they can, they won't. Would I dance attendance on her ladyship like that, if I were Paul —leave the cake-crumbs, to follow her freaks and fancies? Catch *me* doing it! There's Cousin Clermont, too—your humble servant at command this morning. Shouldn't mind myself, much—if that Aunt Gerty were not there. She's a sharp one! is Aunt Gerty. Annie Lawton—by Jove! but I'd go a mile or twain for her. Paul and Virginia!—pretty billing-cooing pair. Clermont and Annie.—C and A in a cipher—C and A. Ah! diavolo!—that would be funny;" and, again dipping his pen in the ink, and thinking for a moment,—"now, then, for the daguerreotype," said his Lordship, yawning; and, as fast as fingers would carry him, wrote as follows:

"Marksbury Parsonage.

My darling Bella,

Here have I been an hour or more with pen in hand, to give you the promised daguerreotype, and, just as I thought the coast was clear, who should drop in at the window but Annie's pets, Paul and Virginia, to pay their respects to me; and there I've been wasting my time, like a booby, doing the amiable, and trying to rob Paul of his mistress, and

all I've got for it is the most shameful ingratitud
usual. So, you can fancy the joy with which
turn to my old flame, confiding in her pity and
giveness to receive back the recreant, if he's r
penitent, and will never do so any more.

Here I am, then, Bella, sweetest *en Grand S*
neur, *un peu indisposée* to-day, tied by the ar
as pretty and pleasant a little prison chamber as
tive ever was couped up in. But don't for the w
say a word to my mother about it, or she'll fanc
sorts of dreadful things, and worry Chambers
of his life for nothing. You should have seen
breakfast I ate to-day. It's nothing but a bit
sprain, got wrestling with Master Jerry—a pet
of Aunt Gertrude's, who, like his mistress, *e*
nous, has rather a will of his own. I'll tell yo
about it presently.

Well, you have got my letter from Braybr
and made it all right with my mother, Bella darl
about that unfortunate money. I can't tell you
annoyed I've been ever since. I don't know
thing ever vexed me so much! She will thin
am incorrigible. I rely on you, Bella dearest,
say all you can, wont you, for me? It happ
too, so confoundedly awkward, just now, for
dunned again so deucedly by that horrid Isaacs,
Blitton Hawksby, and it would never do, w
it, to have any bother down here? Should th

my mother can spare it; though I know she invested a good deal last week again in those foreign bonds, and's in pretty deep, I expect, with that swinging 'Great Gold Vein' spec. Saw her give Nugent Harvey a heap of money. Hope to Heaven it's all right there! Suppose Sam will be down to-morrow, and then, mind, tell me about it.

But now for Marksbury. I can fancy how impatient you are. By the way, I didn't tell you of the pleasant fellow I picked up at Braybrook, one Walter Pemberton, Esq., brother of Counsellor Pem, of that ilk—a very second *Gainsborough*. You would have been charmed with him! Pictures and poetry. as if there were fifty guineas in every 'sweet bit.' By George! you should have seen our scramble across to Copsedenne. I don't know when I ever felt so light-hearted—except when you told me one day, 'there was only one living creature, besides your mother, you had ever loved as much as me, and that was Rufus.' And what do you think Pem said?—'that a lord was every bit as good as a labourer.' There's for you! 'Provided always,' which is material—'that, if Heaven favoured him, the Lord, by raining legs of mutton on him, for asking—he did not require them to be ready roasted, and swimming in lots of gravy.' Not bad that to a real live Lord, and to his face, too, was it? Esther is in ecstacies—hoping, between ourselves, to

get him for a patient; as I let out that he was
bling for his health, and has sent him *carte blan*
and we are all to be taken—Waddle and
of whom more anon—as ugly a cur as you
set eyes on—*en famille*, directly we get him
So, if you wish to be immortalized, you'll
haste and come to Castlemore, and I'll see w
can do to get Annie to let you in. And, now,
pare yourself for something rivetting. An unlu
dog, in some things, don't live than Cecil Fit
bert—that you know. 'It's the plague spot, I
pose, in one's nature,' as Nugent Harvey says,—
can't be rubbed out.' But, like his father,
bright eyes and loving looks, who more t
envied than Cecil Fitzherbert? Only fancy—
was I puzzling my poor brains and fussing
fidgetting myself into a fever, how I should
strike them all of a heap with wonder and d
at the Parsonage—you know how I value firs
pressions—how I should make my *entrée* with
éclat—what say—what do—whether I look
killing as usual—had on the proper suit—an
it was your favourite,—whether I should be gra
gay, taciturn or talkative, elegant or easy, fu
airs or amiable—in a word, how I should best
Annie Lawton's heart by storm, and the shin
of Cousin Clermont; when fortune did more fo
in a moment than I could have ever done for

self, had I been fifty-fold more well favoured than I am.

I can fancy your impatience. Well, then, I wont tease you any longer. You know Thorney-brakes, as they call it, that you have to cross for a good four miles between Copsedenne and Marksbury? No, you don't, but it doesn't matter. We'll go and have a look at it altogether when you come down some day, and see the immortal spot where I made a hero of myself. Well, on I was rolling at a hand-gallop, thinking of you, Bell dear, and peeping every five minutes, like a noodle, at the little *souvenir d'amour*, when Bob, the boy—for I took him on all the way from Braybrook—twisted round in his saddle all of a moment, and, pointing to something a-head of us, there, certain enough, was a run-away pony-chair, coming down the hill just before us full-tear, and two ladies in it, without reins, and motionless, like a couple of marble statues waiting to be dashed to atoms. You know my agility—my surprising presence when beauty's in the case, and it's worth the trouble? In a moment, though at the risk of my precious neck—I can see you shudder—I was in the road; and it was just the turn of a die whether I was to be rolled over—I, Cecil Fitzherbert—discomfitted—in the dust—or to walk forth a hero for the remainder of my days. Fate turned up for me, how could it otherwise? The ponies, staggered at

such pluck! wheeled on one side; but that w
dodge wouldn't do, by George! for me. I kn
Shetland's trick too well for that—don't
remember Rob Roy running away with m
Richmond?—he never tried it twice, though,
young devil! Well, we had a hard struggle f
At one moment, I thought I must have let go—
Jerry's a very limb, too!—till running up int
hedge—then I got his head in a vice, and, pl
and kick as he would—you should have seen
and Aunt Gertrude, pale as ashes, scramblin
and dragging poor Annie Lawton, almost cold
corpse, after her,—fight to the last as he did, h
obliged to give in, the Turk! and own hi
conquered. Can you fancy my state of felicity?
must imagine it, Bell, for, as Walter Pemberton
'language has no powers to convey some things.

Pains-takings, indeed, about appearances an
pressions! You should just have seen Annie's
though dimmed of half their lustre with those
of joy and gratitude, and Aunt Gerty's smiles
Clermont's congratulations, and the Vicar's fat
embrace, and good dame Lawton's heart-heav
and huggings! Wasn't it a sight for sore
Wasn't that making my *entrée* with flying colo
And, now, do you think I would exchange my spr
arm—in a sling, too, of Annie's own making-
any other arm—no, not cousin Clermont's own

all Marksbury? No, not even for cousin Clermont's, though at this moment it may be stretched forth to save sweet Annie from tripping over a bramble, or wetting her pretty little fingers, culling water-lillies.

And now you will be all on wires, I can fancy, for the daguerreotype of Annie and Aunt Gertrude; and to know how I like Clermont; and, no less important—how Annie likes him, too. And what sort of an old place the Parsonage is; and all about my rooms—for I'm quite grand I assure you! None of your little, huge beamed, low-ceilinged bit of a snuggery, with tiny, tucked up tester bedstead in one corner that you used to laugh so much about; and great, heavy, clumsy, black-oak chest of drawers, and straight-backed, grandam easy-chair at the bed head, and whimsical old looking-glass, like that in Bridget Croft's room at Castlemore, twisting your nose and mouth into all sorts of spasmodic horrors; and Damon and Phyllis, with a dear little innocent lamb a-piece in a blue ribbon, on the mantle-piece; and the great parchment prayer-book, and the *prie-dieu* chair,—no such thing! But a *salon*, Miss Bella—*charmant, je vous assure!* and *chambre-à-coucher, en suite*—furnished and fitted up, Mademoiselle Bella, almost as faultlessly as you would have done it, Bell, yourself. Could you but take a peep at me at this moment, surrounded by everything *Grand Seigneur* can desire; having only to raise

my eyes to my open window—into which a thou
sweets are floating from a thousand flowers
every breeze—to be greeted on all sides by "swe
bits," as Walter Pemberton would call them
surpassed; could you but be the little bird I
you long to be, and, winging your flight t
Parsonage lawn, perch unseen on that grape
there—whose melting clusters hang basking i
sun, untouched for me—so richly am I loaded
would puzzle you to find a fault, my Bella—t
what wish—but one—of your Cecil's heart, wa
fulfilled. Ah! that one wish—chief, best of a
suppose, grant it,—there would be none
left, my Bell, for heaven—

"What is it to the nightingale,
If there his darling rose is not?
In vain the valley's smiling throng
Worship him, as he moves along;
He heeds them not—one smile of hers
Is worth a world of worshippers;
They but the star's adorers are,
She is the Heav'n that lights the star!"

Ah! if Walter Pemberton were but at my
at this moment, you should have a daguerreoty
The Rose of Marksbury, would do her some s
justice. I will try. Picture to yourself all t
most lovely in a *blonde* of the purest cast—h
that rare pale golden hue and exquisite gloss

texture hardly ever seen in our climes, and in harmony only with *one* complexion, nothing more transparently beautiful than which, of its kind, have I ever met with in any clime than Annie Lawton's; eyes of that sweet genuine blue, and tenderness of expression, only pourtrayed to the fancy by the word heavenly! beaming with nought but light, and love, and peace, and purity; a mouth far too dangerous to look at long, have you a heart not pre-engaged, my Bella, and as susceptible as your silly Cecil's; and, for the rest—if I have not said enough to drive you mad already—a forehead, nose and chin faultless as your own; and a form, perhaps you would say, a thought under the standard height, but so near the mark, so perfect at all points, that I don't think even your critical eye could find a fault. As to goodness and all that sort of thing, and sound sense, and amiability, and all that—I never knew any young ladies, however tastes might differ as to beauty, but were, of course good, and sensible, and amiable, eh, Bell, dearest? All I can say is, that if ever there was, really and truly, a perfect angel on earth—look at her every way—it is Annie Lawton! And so, I think, my Bella would say, too, if she had seen the smiles she gave her Cecil yesterday, when he saved her from that Jerry. But Bella mine must come and judge for herself; and though they say, 'two of a trade don't agree

the best,'—there's room, and plenty, at Marks
for two angels—Bella won't say a word to Ro
Bainbridge, will she, for the world? — for *two*
angels like Bella and Annie; who, if they woul
pulling caps and tearing each other's eyes out,
be very different sort of little angels to what the
taken for by Cecil Fitzherbert, I am thinking.

As for Aunt Gertrude, or, Gerty, as they call
generally—she's a nondescript! A unique little
of a woman as ever you saw, Bell. Not bad
ing at all, handsome rather, when in humour, w
is pretty well always, but when she can't
get her own way. Dark-eyed and haired
full fire enough in those eyes to kindle into a f
with just a spark to begin with; and with a pe
little figure, foot, and ancle. The life of the
when fun's afloat, but grave as a judge in an ins
if occasion need it. One moment so sharp
saucy, there's no mercy for you; the next, A
herself might take pattern from her for gentle
and kindness. Love's a little good natured sati
the bottom of her heart as much as any one, tho
she abhors, she says, ill-natured people. Coul
awfully severe, couldn't she, that's all? Had a
rather have her for my friend, by Jove! than
Sound-headed, and hearted, too, not a question;
a spirit, if put up! Clermont has got a good fr
there, any one can see that. Hardly know whe

we shall love each other or not; and she don't seem to care much either, which way it is, not she.

Think you would admire Clermont amazingly, though he wants fire. Good features and figure, which, last, by the bye, he spoils by shocking dressing. Is going to give Buckmaster a turn, for I told him you were an awful quiz. Sweet on Annie—so, make your heart easy on that score. Saw that the moment I landed. Think he's the least bit in the world jealous about the run-away. Not unnatural, is it? They have all gone botanizing; and I was to have had my first lesson to-day, but Esther Lawton, our body physician, wouldn't listen to it, and has put those villainous leeches in sight, just to show me she's in earnest.

"Have had a long chat this morning with the Vicar about Castlemore. Can see, tell my mother, he's precious sweet on Linwood, though he won't say so. Think we shall get on pretty well together. And, as for Madame—by George! she's a pattern. Just what a country parson's wife ought to be; seems to live, *to do good*,—and that's no bad office, is it Bella, dearest?

Altogether, I feel as happy—as *at home*, Bella, darling—I know how you love that word—as is possible, so far from those it nearly broke my heart to tear myself away from on Tuesday. Tell my mother

—to whom I mean to write to-morrow—she nee
fear a bit about my health—I'm in capital hand
can tell you. By Jove! you should have seen Es
over the poor bruised shoulder just now; and
long phiz she pulled when she found I'd done
about the posset; and the breakfast I walked
when she'd done her stories. Awful, that it
Ah! diavolo!—here she comes to see her patient
hear the creak of her shoes on the landing;
there are those infernal leeches, too, she won'
happy till she's given a meal off me before nigh
So, as my arm begins to shoot a bit, farewell,
dearest, for to-day; and having set my heart on
ing you and my dear mother—to whom say all
loving and dutiful things imaginable for me and
fifty kisses—seeing you both at Castlemor
soon—and, if you disappoint me, you know
consequence,—and reserving, for my next, all a
the old house and Marksbury that I think will int
you; and, trusting you will not cry for me too m
you silly goose!—and so give Annie an advan
she could never have without,—

Believe me ever, my Bella own,

Your affectionate.

C. F

"There, I thought as much!" said Esther Lav

quietly entering the room as Cecil threw down his pen—probably thinking she might wake him if he had fallen into a doze,—"still with those naughty writings! Well, but how do you feel now?"

"In heaven!" replied Cecil.

"And not tasted a morsel of your oranges, or anything," reproved Esther, pouring out a little of the barley-water, and setting the example by drinking every drop.

"After that stiff breakfast?" reminded Cecil; "impossible!"

"No fever?—no,—well, that's a blessing! Then, I don't think it would hurt you now—just to take a gentle turn or two round the shrubbery in the shade. But you had better put a warmer handkerchief than that round your neck—in case of a chill."

Cecil positively assured Esther Lawton, "he was melting."

"That's the very reason!" said she. But, being again assured, that he would certainly sink under it if he did, the difficulty was got rid of by the *extra-wrap* being in readiness on the hall table—in case of need; and, this arranged, Cecil stepped joyfully out on the velvet turf; and, having given Esther the slip, soon was lost among the wood walks that branched off in all directions round about the Parsonage; and, presently espying the ramblers return-

ing from their botanizing, made straight acros
meadows; and, coming suddenly upon them
awares from behind a holly-bush—nearly
Rosalie Bainbridge into hysterics, so like an A
brigand seemed his Lordship.

END OF VOL. I.

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MOTHERS AND SONS.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE.

BY WILLIAM PLATT, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MOTHERS AND SONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOOD-WALK HOME.

AUNT GERTRUDE was in high feather when Cecil, jumping out from behind the holly-bush on them, formed the Brigand *tableau vivant* so much to Rosalie's delight; Annie, as usual, all smiles and happiness; and Clermont, loaded with his herbal and honours, and carrying every one else's prizes as well as his own, with the exception of a small choice bunch in Rosalie's left hand, held tight there, which, Aunt Gerty mischievously whispered Annie, was to keep him at her side—in exceedingly good key.

A happier little party never made dell and dingle ring more joyously with their merry laugh, and it only wanted Walter Pemberton to have been of the number, to have raised them all to the sublimity of earthly ecstacy. As it was, they seemed as near the

mark as mortal heart could wish for. It was ev
one and all were on the best possible terms
themselves, and, therefore, with each other. No
pleased Aunt Gerty much better than to be th
a woman of nerve and resolution. It was one
hobbies; she plumed herself immensely on it.
to-day, being met on all sides with unbo
praises and congratulations on the admirable co
and presence of mind, to which quite as much
Lord Fitzherbert's fortuitous help and gallant br
she and her niece owed, under Heaven, their
breadth rescue from destruction the day befor
may be imagined, she was finely on stilts, a
the best of humours to do her part to make
one to the full in as high feather as herself.
Annie, who had ever seen her with a cloud o
unsullied brow, who had ever beheld those blu
beaming with aught but sympathy and kind
or heard those sweet guileless lips breathing
but purity and peace?

But if Annie Lawton's bosom heaved wit
derer emotions than usual that happy morni
every object that met those loving eyes seem
vested with colours and attributes more be
than ever, and her heart could hardly contain
for joy, we may be sure she had her own re
and being sure, whatever they were, they mus
been very good ones, the treasure may be safe

in the jewelled casket that contained it, kept under lock and ward by such a mistress. And no doubt Clermont had his good reasons, too, for meeting his cousin Cecil in the wood-path with that honest, hearty greeting, so different from that of yesterday; when, do what he would to conquer a feeling of which he was ashamed, he could hardly bring himself to behave with decent affection to him, notwithstanding Cecil's marked attentions to himself, and so richly deserving as he was of his gratitude and pride; while Rosalie Bainbridge, not to be behind hand, and having her reasons also for no less self-content, kept up such a run of fun and frolic with her laughter and loquacity with Clermont, that poor Annie could hardly get in a word, and, when she did, it stood no chance with Rosalie's broadsides of ridicule and raillery; so, she was perfectly content to jog on side by side with Aunty, when the path narrowed to but two abreast,—"taking only good care to see mischief before her, so as to be ready to interpose should aught serious call for interference."

"I am afraid I have been a great loser to-day," said Cecil to Aunt Gertrude.

"A gainer, say rather, in every sense," replied Aunty.

"How so?"

"We have been pitying you."

"That is consolatory."

"A loser?" cried Rosalie, looking back and l
ing over her shoulder; "I should think you
indeed."

"If it's of anything *you* had to give
Miss Rosalie," returned Cecil, "I am inc
able."

"*I* have to give?" laughed Rosalie. "O
it's not what I have to give. I have nothing t
—at least—nothing that's worth having. It
Mabel you must go to—isn't it, Annie dear?"

"So it seems, indeed," smiled Annie; "I
saw such an inexhaustible stock as Mabel's."

"What does she deal in," asked Cecil, "th
precious?"

"O, you never saw such a list," cried A
"It's quite incredible where she gets them all
and scatters them about, too, as if they cos
nothing. Don't advertise, whatever you do,
you want a wife, till you've seen Mabel."

"You think, really, she may have somethi
suit me?"

"You must be very difficult to please, if
cannot suit you."

"You will introduce me?"

"No need at all. A shilling—or—yes—say
a-crown—as you are a great Lord, and will w
Princess,—half-a-crown,—and you may pick
choose, I'll warrant."

"Ah! may I? By George! Clermont, we'll go and see what Mabel's got to sell, then, won't we?"

"Oh, Mr. Clermont's so tiresome and literal!" said Rosalie; "he believes in nothing."

"And pray, Miss Rosalie, what have you got for your shilling to-day," asked Clermont, "that you should be so credulously thankful?"

"More than some pining hearts can get, Mr. Clermont, pine away as they may," replied Rosalie; "my heart's choice, please, Mr. Clermont—when I please to have him—at the mere beck of my finger, Mr. Clermont."

"Fortunate girl!" responded Clermont. "Perhaps you would not prize him the less, if you could not get him quite so easily?"

"O the affectation of you men!" cried Rosalie—"the insufferable vanity and self-conceit!"

"How shewn, pray, in this instance?" asked Clermont.

"You would hang out of reach, would you," answered Rosalie, "that you might keep her at arm's length, supplicating you to come down from your high estate, and condescend to make her Mrs. O.?"

"Don't you think," smiled Clermont, "that the bunch we often most long to pick, hangs furthest out of reach?"

"Catch me pricking and scratching my fingers," laughed Aunt Gerty, "after the top branches, when

there was a ripe one, ready to pick, within length."

"Ah! by George! I don't know, though," Cecil. "There's ten to one more pleasure in ing down a long shot—isn't there, Clermont,— all the others in the covey put together?"

"So I can fancy," agreed Annie; "but that, pose, is because it is what you call more sport like."

"The long shots are not always the ten birds, though, are they?" asked Aunty.

"Ah! and pray, Miss Gertrude, what fortu you to-day?" enquired Cecil.

"What do you say to a tall, handsome, eyed, fair-haired man, who is dying for this instant—this very instant?" answered Gerty, mysteriously.

"You don't say so? Rich as Crœsus of cou concluded Cecil.

"No—that's the only bother."

"Exceedingly annoying!"

"Isn't it?"

"Confoundedly! A competence?"

"Scarcely."

"You won't be so rash!"

"You think you wouldn't? It isn't alway gets a chance."

"How can you live?"

"To be as rich as Rothschild—some day."

"Ah! by George! that'll do — some day — when?"

"If we can but keep the pot boiling till the carriage comes."

"With true love, what could be easier?" asked Annie.

"O! there *is* to come a carriage?"

"And four!—may it please your Lordship."

"That alters the case materially! But where's the *tin*—meanwhile?"

"In his labour, please your Lordship—his talents —he is very talented!—a poet—and a painter— and a musician—and a philosopher—and a F.R.S. and a F.L.S.—and Oh, I don't know what else besides! I dreamt of him—don't, whatever you do, ever tell my beau the Doctor—all last night dreamt of him; so, of course it's fated, isn't it—a *fait accompli*—or as good as one?"

"Strange!" said Cecil. "Tall—blue eyes—light hair—handsome—poet—painter—poor? by George! the very man—our author-artist—Walter Pemberton himself. By Jove! I give you joy."

"Law, how unfortunate!—there melt all my golden visions in a moment."

"How so?"

"That sly gipsy must have heard us from behind the bushes, talking of him, to be sure she did; and

about the 'ready-roasted legs of mutton swimm
in gravy;' there's a wicked slut!"

"And Miss Annie's shilling's-worth?" enqu
Cecil; "a good twelve-penny-worth, I'll bac
Miss Annie gets her merits."

"Yes—if," smiled Annie.

"What, only a plain country Squire, or somet
of that sort," laughed Cecil. "Would I stand th

"Don't she wish she may get as good?" gig
Rosalie; "I should think so!"

"None at all—not even a plain Squire for A
Lawton?" repeated Cecil. "I know better
that."

"Oh! yes, indeed," said Annie,—"they, a
them, are only to have one husband; I am t
twice married, and die a widow—there's for you

"Twice!" echoed Cecil; "and die a widow?"

"And motherless, too, poor soul!" added Au
"isn't it scandalous?"

"What rubbish!" exclaimed Clermont.

"Rubbish! Mr. Clermont?" cried Rosalie. "I
shall I tell you why you don't think it 'rubbis
all?"

"If you please."

"Because, if you had thought it all 'rubb
pray why, when Mabel wanted to tell you
fortune, were you off in all that hurry to pick
blackberries which nobody could eat? tell me

It was't that you wanted a shilling,—no—no—or I'd have lent you one. You'd like to know, I'll warrant, what's to be the christian name of Mrs. Clermont Onslow, as well as any of us. And now, will you give me the shilling if I'll tell you?"

"No, no—you're as great a cheat as Mabel herself," laughed Clermont.

"As sure as fate I know, then," said Rosalie.

"Tell us, Miss Rosalie; yes, do," prayed Cecil.

"Rubbish!" cried Clermont.

"If you say 'rubbish' again, I'll tell," threatened Rosalie.

"You will be more discreet, I am sure," smiled Clermont.

"Do you think, Miss Annie, that the heart can love twice?" asked Cecil.

"Not with the same passion; or, rather, the same sort of passion and intensity, I should think," replied Annie.

"But it might, perhaps, afford just room for the second tenant—after a fashion?"

"Finding his own fire, perhaps," observed Aunt Gerty.

"I should think that the heart which has loved truly, and wholly, and devotedly," said Annie, "has loved—in the purest sense of the word—for the first, and the last time."

"So say I," responded Clermont.

"Then, woe betide your second, Annie, laughed Rosalie. "He will have to find his fire, I can fancy; and candles, too, for any his lady's bright eyes will give him, darling, he?"

"How thinks Miss Gertrude?" asked Cecil.

"About what—second loves?" cried Aunty "O, dear, they are above my poor comprehe and that's the truth of it. Strange, unaccou things those loving little hearts! Not two find alike. Some, so commodious and conv there's no end to the room they've got to making up beds for any number of inmates th get, the cormorants!—witness Siby Gomm, who has buried four husbands at Fernleigh, an she loved the last the best of all;—others, so cr and put to it, they can hardly lodge one w pinching and screwing him to pieces, that he' if he could, twenty times-a-day; others, and th your constant, comfortable sort, just with enough, and none to spare, for one good tenant if they get that, think themselves exceedingl off, and make your very notable little wife; so selfish and shut up in their own little nu they've no room for themselves hardly, much l any lodger. So, now you must pick and and please yourselves. We can only answer f selves in this deceitful life, and scarcely that;

think, when Aunt Gerty finds a lord and master to her liking, she will have had quite enough of the first —should he give her the chance—without wishing ever to be tormented with another."

"Exactly my sentiments, dearest!" applauded Rosalie. "Siby Gomm's domestic bereavements must be looked into—they are a scandal to her sex! *Entre nous*, Siby don't kill them one after the other at that rate by kindness, do you think so?"

"I shouldn't like, myself, at all," agreed Cecil, "to be Siby's fifth, and that's the truth of it."

"Nor Annie's second, I can fancy," was on Rosalie's lips, "if her first were somebody I know, my Lord;" but, arriving at the Parsonage gate, and old Nep bouncing out with his usual rough, but honest welcome, to greet them, Rosalie ran gleefully off to Esther Lawton, who stood waving her handkerchief at the open window—to show her her floral trophies, and to "hope and trust that luncheon was ready, as she was ready to eat her fingers off with hunger."

"And you naughty, incorrigible boy!" cried Esther, as Cecil came up with a contrite look enough to soften any heart,—"this is the way, is it, you mean to serve me? I've a good mind, that I have, to let you taste nothing but gruel for twenty-four hours; and see how pale you look, too!"

In vain Cecil pleaded, and declared, "that his

walk had done him a world of good!" There wa
poor sling-bound arm, and the pale cheeks to
the contrary; and nothing would do but that,
moment he had had his luncheon—and she was
all sure that rabbit-curry was proper food for an i
—he should go, and try to get a little sleep; and,
that—when the arm was bathed again—and if
was no fever—they would all come up and kee
company for an hour; and then he must—aft
dinner—have his tea—and go to bed early; a
please God the whey posset put him into a good
of perspiration—they mighn't want to put o
leeches—all would depend of course."

"All depends, do you hear?" said Rosalie, s
gling into his Lordship's plate another helping
curry. "All depends, remember—on the posse
patience. Whatever you do, stick steadily t
posset. Now, I can tell you a case—if you
believe—a case—that happened—let me see—"

But, the hall door-bell ringing,—"who is
wonder?" said Aunt Gerty; and, Cecil makin
retreat—not choosing to be visible till in proper
for the coming levée—Miss Rosalie's case h
give way for the entrance of as pretty a little
of Marksbury May-flowers, in their close-poke
morning muslins, as ever took pains to make
selves charming; and, these being followed by
after ring, Mr. Jennings had enough to do, wha

one thing and another,—and soon the Parsonage drawing-room was quite a picture to behold.

"There now—that will do beautifully," said Esther, adjusting the sling after having seen that the fomentations and frictions had been duly applied; "the swelling gone down astonishingly, I declare. Only have a little patience—and mind and don't leave a drop of posset to-night—and I do hope and trust we may do without the leeches now."

Cecil "earnestly hoped so, too."

"There, then," continued Esther, "you will do very well for the present. If you are thirsty, the oranges are as sweet as sugar—they can't hurt you. Let's see—peeping into the Queen Bess—you havn't drank all your barley-water. I think a bit of chicken nicely boiled, with some vegetable marrows — or a little nice mutton broth, without any grease—will be just the thing for your dinner."

"The boiled chicken and marrows were what Cecil liked above all things."

"Very well," agreed Esther. "And now we'll just put the room a little tidy; and then I'll go and tell them they may all come up. Stay—there's the fresh nosegay Annie has picked for your table. You love flowers? So do I. That's it. And, now, you will be pleased to occupy that sofa."

"What, all to myself?" exclaimed Cecil.

"Well, then—you shall have the arm-chair. stay—I'll put a pillow in it."

"There was not the slightest occasion. Cecil thought it would be much cooler withou

Esther knew better. And, the cushion been arranged, and her back turned—Jennin gered a moment to see that all was straight— it up—whirled it on to the bed in the next r and, hastening after his mistress, Cecil Fitz threw himself on the couch, to await with patience he might the arrival of the ladies.

CHAPTER II.

SOCRATES AND HIS MASTER.

MEANWHILE, the Vicar on his old white cob went pacing calmly on his rounds. There are many particular positions and circumstances in this ever-hoping life more conducive than others to peaceful contemplation. Some have a fancy for lying on their backs in bed, or on some sweet thyme-bank with their hands across their brows, revelling in the ideal panorama that floats around them; others, for lounging listlessly in their easy chairs, dozing over the fire, and tracing all sorts of fanciful figures in the glowing coals; others, for lolling on a stile, and fancying themselves Lords of all the lordship sat their feet; while others, among whom was Lancelot Lawton, when musingly disposed, loved above all things to find himself in the green lanes, or sniffing the fresh blow of the blue heather, astride of Socrates, his trusty cob, "in whose company alone,"

he used often to say, "he had resolved on so
the most important measures of his life."
enough, Socrates never tripped nor stumbled
way! 'Twas indifferent to Socrates, whether
hill or dale, rough or smooth, moorland or mea
on he paced, safe and sure, never failing, tru
trustworthy to the last, knowing every turn
tarrying place where duty called, as well as,
sometimes better than, the hand that guided
You might have given Socrates his head, a
would never have outrun his heels. He was a
beast, most comely and content of aspect, per
as much as anything, because, unlike his mas
who would pat his sleek old sides with prid
joy—he was well satisfied with the clover th
lived in. 'Twas a secret, and a grand one,
own. He got fat on it, that is very certain.

Lancelot Lawton, though so sharp-boned—
fine of mould and fair enough of feature—to
called the little more than skin that covered
flesh, even in those days of the brim-full me
pressed down and overflowing, would have b
gentle exaggeration, rejoiced in the comeline
his companion. He, too, his Reverence, liv
clover; but his bones shewed, nevertheless,
through his skin. Every mouthful that So
took seemed to do him good; nay, he thrived
him as you would, nothing ever seemed to

him sick or sorry, and he had to work hard, too, sometimes, and take pot luck and be thankful with the rest. And Socrates was thankful—and so Socrates got fat. Piquant and piping-hot was Lancelot Lawton's pot-luck—and lo! how lank and lean was he! Gentle reader—of an easy, happy turn of mind, patient, and plodding on to his journey's end, never rebelling against the burden that he bore, nor knowing, nor caring to know of, a snugger berth than fate had dropped him into, was Socrates. How it might have turned out, could Socrates have imparted his secret, for which he got such caresses into his master's ear, we know not. There are some natures and types of constitutions never fatten, feed them as you will; the spirit is for ever at enmity with the flesh; good things are thrown away upon them; ever eating—ever hungry; with a wolf always in the stomach—the longer you lard them, the leaner they get. Friend Socrates had his 'Cuyp,' too, as well as his master, and would you only have insured him a long lease, he had asked nothing better than his pleasant lot at Marksbury. He knew nothing, nor cared to know, of any other 'Cuyp,' of any warmer stall, nor sweeter bit of hay or herbage on the other side of the distant hills than on this. In a word, aspiring reader, Socrates was not troubled, like his Master, with that rest-robbing, spirit-racking, flesh-devouring curse, superfluous ambition. Socrates'

ambition seemed to be—to do his best in what he had to do; and, that well done—to bless his stars, apparently, that his labour was so little for reward so large.

Herein was the great difference between the Pastor and his Pony, a difference which many more pastors than Vicar Lawton might profit by, would they but con it closely. 'Tis not an unpleasing picture. The contrast certainly is striking—the subject full of sly meaning, though ordinary enough—the grouping in pretty correct keeping—the general tone and effect by no means over-coloured—and the *morale* palpable as light and dark. Probably the handling might have been better. The mild, patient, drowsy eye of the old pony might have been brought out stronger; the only trouble he had in the world being shewn by the gad-fly on his hip, just about to be laughed to scorn by a flack of his waving old tail; and a full face and figure of his Reverence, well touched off, would have added amazingly, no doubt, to the vigour of the portrait—with his lips compressed, and his eyes drinking in the prospect in the direction of Castlemore, and his chest heaving at the thought, and his sharp rigid features almost lighted up into a smile, as, patting Socrates' plump loins, "ah! come but that day," he says, mentally, "thou shalt cease from thy labours, too, good Socrates, and, with the fattest bit of pasturage at Linwood for thine own,

kick thy heels, Socrates, and roll in the lap of luxury for the remainder of thy years." But we have done enough just to sketch out the idea, all we feel competent to, leaving it to abler hands to fill in and finish off what we feel confident, if only turned out by one or two 'specials' we could mention, would not only be safe to be hung *in sight* next exhibition, but, as sure as fate, to have a little bit of green paper stuck on one corner, with the four letters on it prized by artists beyond all the rest of the alphabet put together; yes, and that too, or we are very much mistaken, before the doors had been closed an hour on the privileged day of the grand "private view."

Had we, in times gone by, met Lancelot Lawton building castles on the back of his trusty cob, as, letting fall the reins on his punchy neck, he resigned himself entirely during his meditations to the guidance of that faithful friend,—we might hardly perhaps have said, to our mind's eye, that he was just the sort of pastor suited for a fold like Marksbury's. Had any one asked us, whether we could have better fancied him at home in a stall at York, or Canterbury, or doing duty to a brilliant congregation in the precincts of St. James? very likely, on a second glance, we might have seen reason in the query, and thought so, too; but had we been asked, whether we would counsel the removal to York, or Canterbury, or even to St. James itself? we think we

should have bid the Vicar pause—have an good look, before he ventured, at his 'Cuyp'— then, if still irresolute, we would have pointed t Socrates and, if that failed, left him to his Many as have been the times that we have c their path on hill and dale, we never saw together, but the words rose to our lips involun "which now is the happier—the pony, or the pas —so striking a contrast did there seem be them! And then, more than ever, felt we the i conviction—how infinitely inferior often is man, in all his pride and glory—touching the ledge of the things indispensable for his peac the beasts that perish! Man, vain, pre tuous man! first, grand lord of the creation! art thou?—The most responsible, and, yet, seemingly, the least rational of God's cre And, yet vauntest thou thyself of thy wisdom. slave!—slave of every favourite impulse— and undoing—building and casting down—s evil to reap good—poisoning the fountain source, yet expecting to drink sweet waters—c of to-day—anxious only for the morrow whic never come,—the meanest thing that craw earth might ofttimes teach thee reason, O man!"

Gently pacing on, continued Vicar Lawt hold pleasant communings with himself; till,

cleared Thorney-brakes, and coming to two cross-roads, one running to Bury-hatch, the other to Fernleigh, he pulled up; and, thinking a moment as if undecided which to take,—"yes," said he, "I will go and have a chat with Lucy Onslow, and a glass of her grape wine;" and, turning Socrates' head in the chosen direction, again the Vicar was lost in meditation, leaving it to his trusty fellow-traveller to take him all safe and in good time to the point in view.

For some twenty minutes was Lancelot Lawton left to the undisturbed enjoyment of his reveries; when, making a dead halt, Socrates reminded him that Lucy Onslow's pretty cottage stood close by; and, throwing the bridle over the paling, long enough to allow comfortably of a nip of the short sweet turf that bordered the path side, should Socrates be so minded, the Vicar passed the garden wicket; and, peeping through the bow-window into Lucy's little drawing-room, as one sure of a hearty welcome, and not seeing her there, sauntered round to the rear of the house, picking the gooseberries and currants on his way; but not finding her among her flowers or feathered favourites as he expected, made straight for the kitchen; and, entering without ceremony, as he had done a hundred times before, there sure enough was Lucy Onslow—though so weak and delicate she was obliged to occupy one of Dolly's

arm-chairs—busy as a bee, superintending the doing down and capping over of pickles and preserves, and inscribing them with their names and dates with all the gravity and formality of a judge, as they were handed with due care, one by one, to receive their final warrant, by old Dolly.

"Well, now, that is odd!" cried Lucy, pressing the Vicar's hand. "I was sure I should see you to-day. I was dreaming of you all last night. And Annie and Aunty escaped, Clermont says, without a scratch? God be thanked!"

"A most providential escape," responded the Vicar, "was it not?"

"Indeed yes! And my nephew, Cecil?"

"Only a sprain, I fancy. Esther has got him in hand."

"Ah! then he's safe enough. But, now—what will you take—you must be parched this broiling day."

"It suits me, you know. We lean, scare-crow bodies love basking in the sun."

"A sandwich and a glass of sherry?"

"Would his Reverence like a taste of the orange jelly?" suggested Dolly. "Or, sure, there was the chicken and ham pie?"

"No, his Reverence was determined he would not taste meal again of Dolly's cooking till she served him up some day—which he meant should be the

me they killed a porker—a bit of her
) and apple-sauce; and then he would
ɔpy, take his word for it."
en, a crust—and mouthful of the North

t one glass, and no more, of the grape
umbler of water—that was all he was
-so it was of no use to try and tempt
her."
must have its way, I suppose," said
the Vicar's arm into the drawing-room.
you how glad I am to see you; for I've
so long to have a chat with you about
He gave me quite a turn, bouncing into
fore I was up this morning. I made
ng had happened. I do get so fidgetty
hing. It might have been only fancy,
know, I thought, dear boy! he looked
o-day."
Perhaps the yesterday's fright. Yes,
o make him."
ly! Indeed it was! He is so sensitive
said Lucy, "like his dear father."
excellent and high-minded young man!"
icar, sipping his wine and water.
lighted to hear you say so," said Lucy,
ng eyes. "And I hope you are satisfied
gress he makes in his studies."

"Not a fault to find."

"Except one—yes, yes—I know—" sighed
"But what made him pay me such an early vi
you think, this morning? There are no secr
there between us?"

"Can't imagine,—unless to be first bearer
pony accident, in case you should be frighten
is ever so considerate! Or to give Master J
good morning's lecture for his pains."

"Partly so, may be. But what, think you
him ask me for the two hundred pounds I've
keep for him since last summer, and which
never said a word about, nor had a farthing
a farthing, since then."

"Two hundred pounds?" repeated the Vica
a moment or two's thought.

"The little residue that came to him, you
reminded Lucy, "after things were wound up
dear father's death. I have thought of talk
you about adding it to the other savings
times, the first time you saw a chance; but
thing has always put it out of mind. God
him! I was so happy I could please him."

"And he asked you for it this morning
peated the Vicar, thoughtfully.

"Yes; and for no reason but that he fanc
keep it himself—if I didn't want it."

"And did he take it?"

"Yes."

"Very likely," explained the Vicar, after emptying his glass; "now his cousin Lord Fitzherbert is come, he thinks it right to have something more in his pockets than odd coppers, to set the young urchins rolling head over heels in the dust to please Annie and Aunt Gerty; or to treat Tom and Jerry with a pair of new colours when they behave themselves."

"That's it, no doubt," exclaimed Lucy, a tear starting. "Dear boy! I'm only too glad to know he is so rich. Don't you think he grows more like his dear father every day? It strikes me so forcibly whenever I see him now."

"I was remarking the same to Esther but yesterday," replied the Vicar. "In one material respect, I am pleased to see that he does not at all—"

"Ah! true, I know what you mean," anticipated Lucy. "In that respect I cannot tell you what a comfort he is to me."

"For which reason I never learned, you know, in favour of the wish that I have sometimes fancied he once indulged—to follow his father's profession," said the Vicar; "though, with a disposition like Clermont's, perhaps he would have been as safe to escape its moral dangers as nine young men out of ten."

"That is just what I wanted so much to talk to you about," rejoined Lucy, eagerly. "You know the wish nearest my heart?"

"To see Clermont a parson?"

"Above all things. And, if I am ever t
that wish fulfilled, I think I must move that p
of Lawrence's, where he cannot see it."

"Why?"

"Because he never looks at it but nothing
but those ridiculous thoughts of the old h
jacket, and his country's cause, and how he
that he was overpersuaded; till it makes m
pale to listen to him."

"I must own," agreed the Vicar, "I think
are other far finer fields whereon Clermont
shine, with abilities like his, than that of
His are talents, I fancy, would serve his c
much better in the senate than with the sword.

"So I think. There's not a doubt of it. I
can understand, though I am a soldier's
continued Lucy Onslow, impressively, "the
they talk of in the profession of arms. It
to me, there is something so savage and bar
in what they call their *glory*, nineteen times
twenty—something so contrary to every pr
and precept of divine teaching. It must
hateful to God—that thirst for conquest,—
and slaying your brother—the image of his C
by thousands, in cold blood, for *glory*,—th
something so unchristian—so revolting in it."

"Dire necessity" agreed the Vicar, "can al

the excuse for what, otherwise, would, no doubt, be wickedness the most hateful and unwarrantable."

"But does there exist always that *necessity*?" objected Lucy, looking up tenderly towards the Major's portrait; "and, if not, what shall atone for sin so shocking—so unwarrantable?"

"I must have some talk with Clermont about it," promised the Vicar.

"I wish you would. I have no rest night nor day for thinking of it. It is high time now he thought seriously of the profession he means to follow."

"The wise determination on which—the choice of a profession—is indeed an important era in a young man's life," agreed the Vicar.

"You know my wishes?" said Lucy. "My heart is fixed on them. What *you* say will have such weight."

"I have waited," replied the Vicar, "to see whether he would return to the subject himself. I like those things to come from a young man's self. His cousin's arrival has occupied all his thoughts of late; but I shall catch a chance soon, I daresay, of bringing him to book."

"I think he only wants leading."

"I am sure of it."

"Annie admires the red coats, don't she?" asked Lucy.

"Annie?" echoed the Vicar.

"So Clermont says."

"The goose! What does she know about th

"Oh! you and I had our whims and
when we were young as they, I'll be bound fo
I'm sure of this—Clermont has loved the h
jacket twice as much since Annie said one
and in your hearing too as loud as she could
it—she'd never be a parson's wife, not she,
could help it."

"Fiddlesticks! Well, there's no necessit
should—if she don't like, that I know of."

"God bless her! So long as she is happy
matters it?" exclaimed Lucy. "You must
Clermont seriously. It is almost time we d
on something."

"Yes," agreed the Vicar, after a short paus
the Church won't do—there's the Bar—th
field of any, with the *quantum suf* of a
for preferment."

"But wants so much time and money,
it, before the harvests come? And do you
Clermont has quite the *quantum suf*, as you
or the sort of conscience exactly for a lawyer?"

"Young men's feelings and opinions,"
the Vicar, "do alter so, away from the so
influences of home. How is it possible to
correctly of a young man's turn or capability

in sight of his own chimney-pots? I
g into the world will develop powers, and
rewith to work them, which will surprise
ıy with Clermont. At present, he has
his own strength; and never can have,
on his two legs, or on Jerry's back, be-
tsbury and Fernleigh. How is it possible?
e put in the way to become First Lord
asury, or Archbishop of Canterbury, as
been before him; or poor lad! really
ctly see how he is well ever to be either.
Physic."

ould never do. He never hears Dunlop
s dreadful operations, but, don't you
turns pale as ashes? Besides, the study
like that of arms, does seem to me
the heart so!—almost as bad as an
ffice."

vays so, if very often. It calls, certainly,
cise of that strength of nerve and com-
morbid sensitiveness, on the due exercise
ı time of necessity, we poor frail creatures
depend for more than we are sufficiently
too often."

that may be. But still I think, if a
feel faint if he see a cut finger—that is
but his own,—for I have seen Clermont
g with the blood flowing from his head

and shins, and run such hair breadth risks of his life to save another, that have made me shudder, —he never could make a good doctor; nor, with conscience tender as his, shine in the law; nor gain much of glory at the cannon's mouth. I may be mistaken. Certainly, a mother is not the best judge of an only son's capacities. You must see, and judge for me, and, then, I shall have no fear; especially if Annie would only—"

"Ah! say a kind word for the parsons, eh?" laughed the Vicar. "I'm afraid it's hopeless, with that radical sister of mine always at her elbow. You know, don't you, what Gerty says?"

"What—about the parsons?"

"Yes. When we talk of wedding them both decently, in spite of Mabel's prophecies, to a couple of honest country curates—the only plan to make sensible women of them.—'Find us two *honest* ones, mind,' she says, 'and then we'll see about it."

"Think of that now. The impertinence! Like Gerty—loves a joke as much as she loves, in truth, the cloth to which belongs the being she treasures most on earth, and that's yourself, and you know it."

"Well, faith!" smilingly resumed the Vicar, "I don't wonder so much, after all, that's true, at parsons' daughters having an eye for the red coats."

"You think they see so much of the black," laughed Lucy, "that a little change comes pleasant?"

ust be something wrong in the rule
replied the Vicar, "that turns so many
ns' hopeful sons out scamps. I am
elieve that, if I had a son, I should
y to some of my brother clerks—not
f and my ways as the model. 'Impos-
impossible, Sir, to come up to such an
ed my old pupil Stretton Connyers
e sometimes, when, caught in the fact,
rrowfully to his father, the old Rector.
rthly use trying, Sir,—he's perfection,
ean above my mark, Sir—I shan't try,
one half the pains, or less, that old
quired, Stretton would have turned out
low. He must be perfection like his
othing. So, Stretton gave it up; and
eaven save him! if he's alive, driving
,' a first rate charioteer, they say; and
appier man than he ever was before."
l!" exclaimed Lucy. "Boys and girls
s and girls. Impossible to put old heads
shoulders; and they wouldn't become
d they, if we could? And when is the
e between my nephew and Lady Emma?"
ime enough for that. Lord Fitzherbert
ake Castlemore, you know, for eighteen

ey much attached, do you think, to each

"Upon my word I do not know."

"Grows more like his father every day, dear Edith says. I long so much to see him."

"His very counterpart! Depend on it, they'll be scampering over as soon as Clermont has got the harness mended."

"And he seems delighted with his new home?" Clermont says.

"Quite so, at present. Our daily system, when we get into it, will, I'm in hopes, embrace so much that will be useful as well as agreeable, that Lady Fitzherbert and friend Vaughan will have no cause to regret their scheme; nor Cecil, I rather flatter myself, find it intolerably irksome to continue among us—at all events till he has fetched up a little of the lost time—not irretrievably lost, I trust, at his age."

"His mother has done the wisest thing in the world for him!" said Lucy, raising herself up with the aid of her hand crutch, as the Vicar rose from his chair. "And, mind, give him my love—and tell him I shan't get a wink of sleep till I see them all."

"They need no inducements, I can assure you, to hurry them faster than they want to come. But I'll tell them what you say."

"And, now, you will promise me," repeated Lucy, taking the Vicar's arm to the gate—where, patient to the last, stood Socrates, rubbing his old nose

palings and dozily lashing the gad-flies
s flanks, till it pleased his master to
-appearance,—"you will promise me to
with Clermont? I think it's what he
mself. You know there's the thousand
ncle left him?—that, with accumulations,
little help some day. And, you know,
all I can—I may say, I don't spend an
So that, what with one thing or another,
so badly off when I'm dead and gone.
only get him to think seriously of
—never mind Aunt Gerty's nonsense
't heed that a pin. There's Linwood,
fall in soon—Peter Worthington must
eighty—and, if you stay at Marksbury
you to leave us, I do think we should
arts outright,—a word from me to dear
be quite enough."
ue—yes—just so—we will see what can
eturned the Vicar, calling Ben to come
his mistress back to the house;—"yes,
that—there is no hurry—it will be all
d merry-makings, pretty well for the
to come;—and then—come a chance
we'll see how best to make the boy
of Canterbury, or Premier of England,
r, at all events, do our best to try and
fair for it—that's half the battle, isn't

it?"—and, gathering up the reins, while So
and Lucy exchanged affectionate farewells, off
Lancelot Lawton at the old steady pace, to r
at leisure his pleasant conversation with the w
and consider, with the care and gravity it m
the question—and a startling question it
suggested by her parting words, viz:—which,
intents and purposes, would better fill the Lin
pulpit—Clermont Onslow, one of these day
Lancelot Lawton?

"At all events," mentally exclaimed the
after a long brown study, during which he
approached, unconsciously, to within bow sh
his own door porch,—"if Annie likes a red
or a blue, or brown—there is no earthly r
that I can see, that she should ever wed a bl
and pressing on, evidently re-invigorated b
thought, in less than ten minutes, Socrates
work over, and none the worse for that-
contentedly enjoying the fruits of it after his
fashion, and to his heart's desire—rubbing h
nose thankfully in his manger, without one
beyond; while his master, unable, though w
smiling face, to lash the gad-fly from his
hied him straightway, ill at ease, to join
Lordly levee which was "then," as Mr. Jennin
formed his Reverence, "at its height."

CHAPTER III.

THE LEVEE.

It is more amusing than surprising, to observe the credit given, and with both eyes open, in this mendacious world of tinsel and trickery, to mere titles. Gold is a powerful advocate, clearing its clients of many moral responsibilities. It commands a large margin and considerable latitudes. It must be a very black state of things, indeed, which its potent purifying qualities have no power, used adroitly and sufficiently, to make look white. It may fail, in extreme cases, to save from the gibbet or the galleys; though they, poor things! are often robbed by it most scandalously of their rightful due. But it is edifying to see, how near it will let its victims get their necks into the noose, and, until there, pass them off as patterns of perfection. But gold may take unto itself wings, and fly away; and then woe betide those who have placed their

reliance in it! It is only available while it
Its good deeds remain not after it to accre
ex-possessor. It is a title most potent only w
holds. What else can invest vice the most hi
in the garb of virtue, and pass it current?—
falsehood the pass of truth—guilt of innoce
villainy of its victim—the harlot of the
woman—impurity of purity—deceit and dep
o all that is genuine and chaste?

Mark! yonder silky, smirking swindler; an
brazen, unblushing thing, in costly attire, ha
languishing on his arm, sucking in with
ear the soft lies lavished on her by the per
libertine at her other side! What has given the
entrée into that splendid assembly—enabled
to taint its air with their polluted presence
poor, humble, overlooked good-folks! — the
entitled! Don't you see—why will you not
stand once for all, and fidget yourselves no fu
—they have gold—the gold that has mad
keeps them what they are,—and you have
or you might, if you chose, be as bad a
brazen to the full as they.

Next to gold—before it in many cases—
my Lord—and my Lady; Sir Jack—or Sir J
—they are sure cards—highly privileged thei
sessors! See you, poor neglected ones, hu
yourselves in your honesty—yonder noble Exq

in-looking, steady-sailing individual re-
rear? What a contrast! Which would
o have as a companion in the hour
nong friends in counsel—or to depend
remittance that is to pay your rent?
only your own affair—the world has
ll to do with you nor your concerns—
pray, have you got, Mr. Goodman?
now that you get on as well as you can,
y, too, good Goodman. Nay, it has
fifty times, to make out how you manage
vith all those brats, Heaven help you!
ister decently, and keep your poor nose
r as you do; and we do hear that his
-but no—that must be impossible—a
y derogatory piece of spiteful gossip that
s not us, as staunch conservatives, to
to for an instant;—his Lordship has a
ght to take what time his tailors, and
and coach-makers, and tobacconist, or
or his milk-woman choose to give him
their affair. No doubt, they know their
and, if not—is there not his *Title*?—do
hat nothing? Why, the honour of leaving
h of milk at a great Lord's street door
ay—is worth a pint and a half, night and
at yours, you silly Goodman! Don't tell
ldn't you like to have my Lord; or Sir Jack;

or Sir Jemmy to your plebeian name, tur
your nose contemptuously as you will? We
we should preciously! when, just that excee
difficult fortnight before the arrival of the
quarterage, there was no persuading our g
and coal-merchants of our undoubted responsi
and then, pinched and put to it beyond endu
mightn't we with good reason feel utterly disg
with all the world, and with our own ho
plebian *Mr.* and *Mrs.* into the bargain?—we s
think so. When we see what names with
handles to them, like baskets, fetch in the m
—the room they take, and the loads they
it is enough indeed, to make us poor little *pe*
sans manches look about us, and sometimes
for the new 'Grand Human Derbies,' as C
Ferrers calls them, "open to all comers of al
and pedigrees, good, bad, and indifferent in
England." And, then, see which would ge
handles, and which not. The contest would in
some heavy losses as well as many gains.
would be no handles left, we can fancy, on s
we could mention at this moment. And, oh! wou
it be sad work, saddest of any, for the hanger
poor knaves! who have nothing *else* to hang
But some would get them, able to carry their
found honours, no doubt, with good grace,
profit to society as well as to themselves.

the balance of the account would stand in the end, as far as the public weal was concerned, is a problem far beyond our capacity to solve. But already there looks a-head, if we mistake not, signs of important changes coming o'er us—changes which, if not exactly after Charlie Ferrers 'New Grand Human Derby' scheme, are not altogether foreign to the exciting end in view; viz—to hurl monopolies to the wind—rout out cobwebbed corners and corruptions—replace feebleness and insufficiency with strength and competency—to throw open the lists to all native competitors for fame and fortune for the future—have a clear course—a fair start—and no favour—and give the prizes to those, and those alone, who can win them for themselves. This, if acted up to as it ought to be, will do much, if not all that is needed, to make us poor handleless nobodies contented with our lot; confident that, if we, or our children, have but the pith and pluck in us for the contest, the day is not far distant when my Lord, and my Lady, and Sir Jack, and Sir Jemmy will find that there is something more wanting, wherewith to cut a fine figure in the world, than the prestiges of a title, or the patronage of a name.

Holding his afternoon levee—the honoured hero of the hour, the centre, the life, the pride, the soul and essence of the circle; surrounded by all that could make the heart dilate with self-pride

and satisfaction, — how felt Cecil Fitzherb
the possession of the very gratifying titles
had drawn together round him, on the day
which our story has now to do, such universal
as greeted him on every side? Very much, no
as we, or you, would have felt, candid r
similarly circumstanced; and with such eyes be
on us with gratitude and admiration as sweet
Lawton's, and some others no less speaking,
assembled, doing homage to our merits.

When the Vicar entered the presence cha
the levee, as Mr. Jennings had emphatically
nounced it, 'was at its height;' and brilliant
beautiful, as Squires' gentle breeding, and l
sweet smiles and charming *toilettes* could mak
was the scene presented. Lord Fitzherbert occ
a seat between Annie Lawton and Aunt Gert
the preserver and the preserved, as in mutua
and gratitude bound, being indispensable to
other's happiness that day; Clermont makin
very tolerable gentleman in waiting, consid
his modesty, and Rosalie Bainbridge's quizzing
hardly off him for a moment. Esther Lawton,
her bunch of May-Flower's from 'The Grange,
opposite; and, on either side—describing a semi-c
before his Lordship—the Squire and Huntw
Lowndes, of 'Hazelcombe,' divided by Ann B
bridge, the Squire's pet, on the right; and, on

left, by Rosalie, between Clermont and Dr. Dunlop; forming, altogether, as picturesque and pleasing a *tableau* as the Vicar could have desired to contemplate at that moment; when, edging himself in between the May-Flowers, the finishing touch was put that alone was wanting to make it quite complete.

And now let us avoid temptation. Inclined as we may be to give in detail the sparkling flashes of wit and good humour that abounded that brilliant afternoon, the task is not without its difficulties, nor the reader's patience inexhaustible. Of course, the pony-accident was the first and chief theme; Cecil Fitzherbert bearing his honours with that magnanimous modesty, no better foil than which can heroism want to set off its pretensions. Various were the plans proposed for teaching master Jerry —for the whole sin seemed to lie at Jerry's door— better manners for the future.

The Squire "would undertake to break Jerry of his freaks and fancies in two days, he'd bet a hundred, with a sharp bit he'd treat him to, and a tight rein—let him have the handling of him."

Annie "would not have him hurt for the world. It was only play."

Lord Fitzherbert "thought that either Clermont or himself must be body-coachman for the future."

Aunt Gerty "was highly indignant at that. Perhaps Lord Fitzherbert had yet to learn, that she

once drove her donkey-chaise and one, and never met with an accident—but once; and then it was all Jerry's fault, she'd have him understand. A pair of safety reins, she begged to be allowed to say, would be ample, for all purposes, for the future."

Clermont "still inclined to the opinion, that a regular good gallop every morning for an hour over Thorney-Brakes would be about as good as anything. The ponies hadn't half enough to do."

Dr. Dunlop "suggested, with great deference to Aunt Gerty's judgment—first, a course of cooling medicine, which he always advised when the blood was too much up—then, that Master Jerry should come on a friendly visit—quite friendly—to his stables for a week, say—and take him his rounds now and then, without Tom,—and he would pledge his professional reputation, &c."

Esther Lawton "was decidedly for selling them off hand at once, before any blood was spilt, or bones broken; and buying, in their stead, a good, strong, steady, sensible beast, like Lucy Onslow's; and a useful, roomy chaise, with a head to it when it rained, and that wouldn't turn over. She didn't know when she had such a turn! She knew a case once—of two sweet girls, at Laureldale—the eldest could not have been so old as Annie—"

Rosalie Bainbridge, jumping up, "declared poor Lord Fitzherbert looked quite pale—his arm pained

ure—wouldn't he take a grape—or a
nge—they couldn't hurt him ?"
, just one sip, of the barley-water,"
her, anxiously. Only one—just to

e had gone off; but Lord Fitzherbert
ip of the barley-water, as Mrs. Lawton
it. There was great weight, he
e roomy four-wheeled."
Lowndes "thought Shetland ponies
ne young ladies he knew—liked their
ner—terribly skittish—wanted precious
g, as the Squire said—didn't know
at—little devils for mischief—weren't
osalie ?"
begged particularly to be informed,
Huntworth Lowndes spoke from expe-
had never heard that either one, or the
er been off with him—had they ?"
edly, one had quite once; and the other
lidn't she remember ?"
deliverance !—wasn't it ?"
he should serve Master Jerry out as
his wife, if he'd got one. Cakes and
what good were they, but to make 'em
more saucy ? The stick and starvation,
thing like 'em for wholesome discipline."
felt extremely grateful ! Hoped he was

in no hurry for *her* to fix the day? Should like her stomach and shoulders just a little used to it

The May-Flowers offered no opinion, cont like true modesty, rather to listen than to but kept every thing in harmony, even cro Lowndes, and his sticks and starvation, with sweet, engaging smiles.

As for the Vicar, he had enough to do to look on and learn, rather than teach tha like his laughing little friends; but, being by Aunt Gerty, touching the donkey-chaise an which seemed to Lord Fitzherbert to require boration,—he "felt free to admit, that with care for the future—and the sharp bit, an tight hand—and the safety reins—and the coachman, if the old one couldn't do—an regular good gallop every morning over Th Brakes—and, these failing, the stick and star —she might be trusted very well. And, if Master Jerry shewed any more of his tric really saw nothing for it, so to speak, but t him, *nolens-volens*, under the Doctor's ca cure outright; or, if the case were beyond the of art, by all means to make a change, as Lawton judiciously advised, for the steady, s old stager, and the roomy four-wheeled that wo tumble over. And now, what news to day, D How about poor Grogram?" enquired the Vic

t to a cinder," replied the Doctor—
left—only the suit—and that's his
-he stands upright in."
ny?" asked the Squire.
the value of a pestle and mortar—not
Huntworth.
oye, Ann," recollected the Squire, "we
ut the Morewood farm; or, sure as fate,
in a pretty mess there some day. Shall
se rubbishing old thatches off the first

ill the poor things ever do?" deplored

e getting up a subscription, I believe,"
Doctor.
st all add our mites at Marksbury,"
ar.
eserve a farthing," grunted Huntworth.
the gallipots, and it wouldn't have hap-

you don't mean to give us a farthing?"
—"is that it?—when Annie and I
rrow to Hazelcombe with our courtesies
ags? Think a bit.—You will have, eh?
heart, will you—to send us away empty
instead of with that little five-pound note
uilding on,—have the heart to say—'get
business, do?' I know better."
n! come and see, then," said Huntworth.

"There's that five you did me out of for Nelly Newland's brats,—would have bought me the two couple of beagle-pups at the sale next Tuesday. Where d'ye think I dig the fives out of?"

"Out of that treasure-house there, to be sure," said Rosalie, pointing her pretty little white finger to the left breast-pocket of the sturdy old beagle-master, and looking up archly in his face.

"Pooh!—rubbish!"

"Yes—out of there," persisted Rosalie, still keeping her eyes fixed on his,—"never without a five, I know—nay—a ten, if *I* wanted it.—Say no, now—say no—if you can, then."

"*You* wanted it?" laughed Huntworth. "Don't know about that. What difference would that make? Can't say—come and see—pooh!—rubbish!—what do you want?"

"Not the stick and starvation—you will please to bear that in mind," stipulated Rosalie; "that—I'd never stand."

"You'd slip through his fingers, any how, I expect," laughed Huntworth—"yes, hold you tight as he would."

"Oh, if he were kind—and good—and gave me all I wanted,—would I give him the slip, that's all?"

"Shouldn't like to be too sure of that,—no—shouldn't!"

"Then, we come, mind, with our bags and best

rrow," fixed Rosalie; "so, there's a nice
e for you. You see what it is to have
l heart!"

st make them up a heap of things among
ngs!" said Esther, her eyes filling—"a
-to-morrow, won't we?"

d take them over," cried Annie eagerly,
ıont fidgetted on his chair; "and the
—without their knowing where it comes

ithout their knowing where it comes
d Clermont. "We'll go to-morrow."

shall," said Esther; "or next day."

Sam's down in time," added Lord Fitz-
vote we all take a ride over, and have a
he fire was."

awton "couldn't look at it, were it ever so.
cold from head to foot even to think of
ways did. Remembered once—

must *insist* once more on Lord Fitzher-
g her to re-adjust the sling—it was not
—she could see it wasn't."

be sure," advised Esther. "And he'd
ps with the barley-water? He was
mself too much. That was often how
the fever came on."

was re-adjusted. Cecil Fitzherbert was
!"

The Squire "couldn't think how it was people would be such fools as to go unin They brought it all on themselves. He co pity them. All he knew was, that he'd ha those crumbling old thatches down on the Mor farm, as soon as Tapwing's lease was out. H no patience with the careful having to pay f careless. There was that case of Susan Nev —the whole lot of 'em thrown on the parish. of the rates—they might well grumble. Wha had her chimney to catch fire? Nothing shoul persuade him they couldn't have put it out, if liked."

The Vicar "had always understood that it w Susan's fault, but the fault of the flue. Rote run up those Thorney cottages of the Sc scandalously! They were not safe to live in."

"They were good enough, and cost enough what they fetched. He'd rather a precious c without 'em. People should take care of thei All he," the Squire, "knew was, *he* was well i —that was a comfort."

"It was a comfort," agreed Lord Fitzherbert

By all means, the Squire "would advise Lord Fitzherbert, when he took Castlemore, away, as fast as he could, with all those old tha He believed there was a good deal wanted do Castlemore. Was glad to hear Lady Fitzh

ghts of running down. Supposed they were
tty tight there?"
ly" Lord Fitzherbert "knew little more about
old house had never been a favourite of his
it wasn't over cheerful, he must say—than
Peter Worthington's ripstone-pippins, he and
Harvey had pocketed some of, out shooting
s, were capital! and the rabbit-shooting ex-
Thought the old place might be made
ble enough."
living, too, that of Linwood," the Squire
ppose. "Had heard not less than £800 a

Fitzherbert "was not sure, but believed it was
900."
must be getting on a-pace. A little deaf
said. Heard him preach last summer, and
ale and hearty as ever," thought the Squire.
en, they said, and he grieved to hear it, a
l of late," the Vicar had heard.
that fit the Doctor was talking about turned
be a great mistake. It was old Jeremy
the clerk, had had a fit, they said now—not
or."
ed!" the Vicar "was rejoiced to hear it—to
at his parishioners were not likely to be
of such a treasure to them as their excellent

"A blessing, were he spared for many, many yet to come!" responded Esther; and sincerely heart spoke Esther Lawton at that moment.

"Well, though Marksbury might not be much more than half of the Linwood living," Gerty, "would think twice before she would c if she were the parson."

"There was no comparison," thought "between the two. Was there, Clermont?"

Clermont considered, "that if there was on on earth more than another where all the ne elements for true happiness were to be found only the right eye to look for them, and the h appreciate, it was Marksbury."

Cecil Fitzherbert, glancing from Annie to Gerty, "decidedly thought so too. It was paradise complete!"

"Where could you find better barley and t crops, then, anywhere in Hampshire?" the wanted to know; and—when he'd got those wood thatches down—tighter homesteads, to twenty miles round?"

Lord Fitzherbert "must have a ride round the Squire, and take a lesson. He had been gratified with what he had seen."

The Squire entertained the highest opinion young friend's judgment. They would "make of it as soon as the mare came down."

e Squire an advocate for tile draining on
em ?"

Fitzherbert would give him the pleasure
pany, with Clermont, at breakfast to-
next day; he would show them a ten-acre
d drained on that system. He forgot at
—his bailiff, Hopcrofts, would tell them—
; but, if that didn't take the shine out of
he was mistaken."

herbert "thought something of the same
be introduced with great advantage at
They were terribly pig-headed, he
reabouts."

re terribly pig-headed, too, everywhere,"
uld tell him. "They ever were and ever
-headed, your English farmers—till you
to 'em, black and white, that two
more than one. He had been trying
nto their thick heads for the last five
was hoarse; and it was only now they
eginning to open their eyes and ears
'

d where would you see a prettier bit of
d than about Marksbury—clear of
kes?" wanted Huntworth Lowndes to
' Linwood?—Might ride across country
and never see a fox, nor feather. Fat
enough, and that was all could be said

about it; but, come to country— come to—" at which moment, Paul and Virginia making their salutations on the window sill—

"Ah!" cried Lord Fitzherbert, "my pretty morning visitors again. Come, come, Master Paul, we are not going to steal away your lady-love, so, don't be frightened."

"Oh! they have been courting your acquaintance, have they, already?" asked Annie.

"You must not be making Virginia false, do you hear that?" admonished Rosalie; "or, as sure as fate, it will end in something serious."

"No fear of that," laughed Cecil. "There, look—I can't get so much even as a smile."

"O, the deceitfulness!" cried Aunt Gerty. "Because Paul, I suppose, was by?"

"That's it," cried Huntworth Lowndes. "Sly fox that—like 'em all."

"No, it is not it," laughed Annie, holding out her hand, on which Paul came bridling in an instant, leaving Virginia evidently much astonished at his departure. He is not jealous a bit. See!"

"There now—isn't that like the men?" cried Rosalie, looking up at Huntworth Lowndes. "Now, see, which is the false one."

"Virginie, Virginie!" called Cecil, trying his best, but in vain, to coax her to his shoulder.

"Try some cake crumbs," recommended Aunt Gerty.

t'll do it—that'll do it," cheered Hunt-
ax 'em well, if ye'd catch 'em."
hat it? Now see, then," said Rosalie,
and dropping some crumbs on Lord
shoulder. "That's your opinion of us
?"
for a thousand!" cried the Squire.
—Virginie!" coaxed Cecil.
ire of that," doubted the Doctor.
e goes—look—look!" giggled the May-

inny!" exclaimed Esther, clapping her
e would—and she wouldn't—"
all," grunted Huntworth; "not a pin
ween them."
lo," chuckled Rosalie; "told you so."
in," encouraged Aunt Gerty. "Faint
ot fair lady. See—see!"
—Virginie—cruel, cruel Virginie!" en-

irginie!" echoed Clermont; and, spread-
s, up flew Virginie, and, making the circuit
any, fluttered for a moment to recover
n; then, to shew Paul, we suppose, that
not be deserted with impunity—found a
her loneliness in Clermont's bosom.
grateful!" cried Aunt Gerty.
ern for her sex!" applauded Rosalie.

Lord Fitzherbert laughed—called her "
hard-hearted—unworthy of his love!"

Paul appeared perfectly unconcerned, picki
crumbs of comfort from his mistress' lips. Cl
was more angry than pleased; and, looking
cousin, could have found it in his heart aln
discard her altogether from his sight,—but t
would not go, upbraid her for her foolish fond
he would.

Annie, "granting it was exceedingly unki
ill-behaved, could only excuse it on the plea of
sive coyness, or coquetry, or, it might be,
Lowndes suggested—fear of Paul's jealous
He was a tremendous Turk was Paul—sh
confess that."

Huntworth Lowndes "must own, he neve
have believed it—if he hadn't seen it with h
eyes—never could have believed it of the sex

Ann Bainbridge and the May-Flowers "qui
cided, that Mr. Clermont ought to feel very pr

Esther Lawton "could not agree at all. V
she went with the Squire—which she sometim
—into the home preserve—there were the ph
running about, pretty dears! as tame almost a
door fowls; and, if she were dressed ever so
in the oldest things she'd got in the worl
might try for ever, and they wouldn't be s
But there was Symons, the under-keeper, in t

cket and corduroy smalls,—they'd come and
the barley fast enough at his feet. Didn't
e remember very well—that day last week,

—yes," the Squire "recollected it perfectly."
ont "agreed entirely; nothing could be
ural and reasonable."
ourse," explained the Doctor, "the satin
hambre was strange to her."
, for his own part," the Squire, "would have
that a magnificent satin like that of his
's was a good deal more after a lady's taste,
t rough tweed of Mr. Clermont's. But
ncies were so capricious sometimes. There
nowing, was there, Miss Rosalie, where, or
ake them?"
ould be a good bit of fun, now, wouldn't it?"
d Rosalie, "if Lord Fitzherbert would, just
oke of it, change coats for the moment with
rmont; and, then, see whether Mr. Clermont,
was to be tossing his head, and carrying it off
ly?"
a bad idea at all," approved Cecil.
pital!" cried the Squire.
Vicar "thought they were taking a vast deal
ouble for Madame Virginie than she deserved.
ly party perfectly satisfied, apparently, was her
what more could be desired?"

"If the arm sustained any injury," all Lawton could say was—"there were the l She would not answer for what might c it."

The Doctor, rising to lend a hand, "thou gently drawing the sleeve off, not much harm be incurred."

Done as soon as thought of. In a momen Fitzherbert had donned the rough tweed, an mont Onslow — Rosalie and the May-Flow ecstacies—sat lounging, *à la Turc*, in the g satin robe;—Virginie, meanwhile—Paul still to his perch—having been banished by Aunt to the window sill, evidently again much indignation and disgust.

Amusing in the extreme was the pitch of ment now visible in every face; not excepting the Vicar's, who, laugh as he might at "such sense," looked on with as much interest as them for what was coming.

"Now, then," cried Rosalie—the cousins exchanged chairs as well as costumes.

"Virginie—Virginie!" called Clermont, feign well as he could, his kinsman's voice.

"Sulky, by Jove!" growled Huntworth Lo

"Enough to make her," pleaded Aunt Gerty

"Virginie—Virginie—unkind Virginie!" re Clermont, beseechingly.

— look — she's coming — she's coming!"
e May-Flowers.
ie, Virginie—cruel, cruel Virginie!" cried
ile Rosalie sprinkled thicker and thicker
pon the rough tweed;—and, poising herself
ent on her wings—up flew Virginie again—
led the room as before—while Huntworth
airly roared aloud with joy—and, fluttering
stant or two over Lord Fitzherbert's head,
seemed to change her mind—and, darting
y across, nestled down again peaceably on
s breast.
ay-Flowers gave a scream of joy.
ou think she don't know my voice?" said
. "Of course she does."
y laughed Cecil, as he resumed the *robe*.
should get nothing, he saw, by false pre-
ith Madame Virginie."
humbug!" shouted Huntworth Lowndes.
you see the look Paul gave her, when she
g to fall into your arms? Sly fox that!"
k 'em, eh—and catch 'em always—can you?"
Rosalie.
Gerty "supposed it must be all spite and
for having had the *grec* shaken at her
rning; she had not forgiven it. Some of
lid bear malice shockingly."
explained it at once," recollected Esther

Lawton. "Didn't they all remember old D
thenes, the cockatoo, Major Onslow brought
from Madras? One day—and no one could
bly be more particular about his food and drin
she was—for it wasn't everything the cockatoo
eat—one day—"

"Dear me!" cried Aunt Gerty, having effec
reconciliation of Paul and Virginia, and with
of her pocket-handkerchief sent them, like
couple ought, to go and find solace for all their
in each other's tenderness,—"past five o'c
declare, my dears; and—"

"Dear me—dear me!" caught up Rosalie,—
Huntworth Lowndes going to stay dinner, too
Annie in her new peach-blossom, I'll be bound
sweetest, you must go home directly, there's
and send Clutton—do you understand, dear?
my pale canary. And, when you come in the
ing, love—bring my two new songs, sweetes
the new Tyrolien Valses—there's a darling!"

"Then, I suppose, I must be going, too
the Squire—"as the pale-canary, in the case
brook delay." And, as soon as the arm wa
again being fixed for the farm survey—the
broke up; Lord Fitzherbert having—on hi
veration on the word of a gentleman, that
still in heaven!—obtained special leave fro
Doctors to make his appearance, *en fami*

table,—"provided always, he would faith-
se to swallow"—and this Rosalie positively
—"every drop of the whey posset that night
vent to bed."

length alone, Cecil Fitzherbert threw
the sofa; and for some minutes seemed
deep and anxious thought.

to his feet, as the first bell rung, to
necessary additions to his toilet—"Devil
!" muttered he. "He enjoyed his
I could see he did—spite of that silky
h! For shame, for shame! Cecil Fitz-
Patience—patience! Spread thy net far
ait the trap but cleverly enough—have
nough — and thou shalt bag thy bird,
erbert—thy Virginie shall come fluttering
om, too, some day, or the blood of thy
s not in thy veins, Cecil Fitzherbert."
tly joining the expectant hearts waiting
him in the drawing-room, not a nobler,
sinterested ever seemed to beat in mortal
did Cecil Fitzherbert's, from that evening
wards his Cousin Clermont.

CHAPTER IV.

LETTERS FROM LONDON.

THE arrival of Sam next day with the mar
London, and the packages and parcels coming
him as fast as eight horses and bells could
them in Master Pickthorn's waggon from Hill
were quite enough for the good folks of Marl
to think of for one while, without the gorgeous
robe de chambre and silk *Grec*, the fame of
having somehow travelled to Tabitha Ludlan
post-mistress' ears—whether through Mr. Je
or Hannah it is impossible to say—had
reached Lucy Onslow, and set all Fernlei
its wit's end to conceive the splendour of.
a buzz of pleasurable excitement do such
events bring with them to a little communi
Marksbury's. What are its sayings or doi
the great world, more than a drop is to the
yet, constitute they the soul and essence of i
existence, and, to all right intents and pu

s much part and parcel of the universal
nd to the full perhaps deserving of our
the opinions and operations of St. Peters-
St James'.

is such amazing interest, too, especially
e male members, in a bit of horseflesh.
seen the open eyes and gaping mouths
door as Sam came through the village
Vernon,' you could only have felt the
of pity for the knowing ones, if such
as that were the genuine bliss it seemed
And, arrived at the Vicar's stables, no
nely happy appeared the admiring eyes that
onging round to welcome Sam and his
rge to their country quarters. True, a
llow at all points than Sam never turned
nel's or Charles Mason's, which is descrip-
e sufficient; so, as Hannah thought to
nd Mrs. Hopkins, too,—"it was not fair
the credit to Di Vernon; though, "they
she was the most beautifullest creature
clapped their eyes on!" As for Clermont,
side himself with joy; and Cecil little less
to observe the surprise and pleasure of
n; though the admirable calmness he
was worthy of all Tattersall's, and hardly
o Sam's, who received the compliments
on him on all sides with that exquisite

sang froid characteristic only of such great
as Sam, and others *ejusdem generis*—a race
Nor was Aunt Gerty behind, indeed, in disp
her knowledge of the craft. In truth, sh
the only one—not even excepting Hannah—
seemed to listen to among the 'rustics,' as he
them, with any patience.

"Pretty mare," agreed Sam. "Better not
too near her hind-haunches—whimsy sometime

Aunt Gerty "thought Sam must have
hot ride over. Wouldn't he like a glass of ale

"Well, he shouldn't have no objection—pre
—when he'd put the mare in."

Aunt Gerty "supposed London was getting t

"Dreadful!" and, taking a small packet
his inside breast pocket, and rescuing it fro
folds of a red-spotted cotton handkerchief in
it was enveloped, Sam handed it to his Master

"And nothing for *us*?" asked Aunt Gerty,
rather a long face.

"A mort of things were coming in the wa
That was all he'd had given him," answered

Aunt Gerty "thought Sam really must be h
after his ride, and that he had better go in a
something to eat and drink at once."

Annie "decidedly thought so, too."

"In the meanwhile, he and Humphrey would
after Di," promised Clermont.

ve 'em! Di be sociable with anyone but
a fortnight?" Sam "should think not.
a temper?"
rty could see it. "How old?"
g six."
m think no more?"
-he wouldn't say but what she might be

e wouldn't hurt her, then."
farthing! Not for three year to come,
ord's riding."
had turned a hair," Aunt Gerty saw;
a melting day. There was so much
n riding."
so there was. Wouldn't hurt her a bit,"
m, "to clap a side-saddle, now and then,
d give her a canter. Would go beautiful,
a chair. Had once carried a lady. Miss
as just a nice weight for her."
eorge! not a bad idea at all," agreed Cecil.
ve a saddle down from Wilkinson's."
s my mother's old one at Fernleigh,"
Clermont. "It only wants a little fresh

oked up vacantly at the speaker; and,
Di's girths with his teeth, without con-
further parley, permitted Humphrey to
to her stall; and, following Hannah to the

kitchen,—"nice lady that of yours—not the
nor quite the young-un, I don't mean," said
sitting down to his repast; "but the young
aged-un—she do speak so pleasant. That's
Annie, isn't it—the young-un? Sweet flower!
be—but don't seem to know much of osses, d
And that's my Lord's cousin, s'pose—Mr. Cle
Onslow? Shouldn't s'pose, he knew much neit
osses—to look at him. Where was the M
Had met the Parson on the common. Not
sort that he was on. Spoke very friendly
though stiffish, wasn't he?"

The Missus was out somewhere in the villag

"A good sort of body—specially to the poor,
had been told; with which, Mr. Sam, setting
good earnest at the cold beef-steak-pie and
brewed, had quite enough to do, at present, w
replying to the interminable list of questions
him on town and fashionable life by Hannah
and Mrs. Hopkins; and which there was littl
when Mr. Sam had the leisure for it, he would
the full as agreeable to talk about as they to listen

Having given the several letters in the
addressed to them, to Aunt Gerty, and Anni
one to Clermont, and his mother, from Lady
herbert, Cecil Fitzherbert retired to his roo
con over more at leisure the contents of the pr
treasures directed to himself.

nd not without a slight nervous appre-
e did it, Lord Fitzherbert broke the seal
t bearing Bella Gordon's superscription;
rst object that met his eager glance being
notes, his breast heaved again; and,
ied himself that the sum of Fifty on the
ach note, in good old English letters, was
and thrust them out of sight for the
his waistcoat pocket, he sat down, much
he perusal of the letter that accompanied
which the reader may prefer should
tenso, for itself, to any mere summary we
of it. Wherefore, we now give it word
vith this prefatory remark due to our-
t any faults found in it, as a specimen of
s epistolary correspondence with the be-
er heart, as well as any beauties, may be
ourse, which is only fair, to Miss Bella's
d not to our own.—

"Hill Street, August, &c.

arest Cecil,

st glance on opening this will, I hope, so
r mind at rest about the lost note case.
ll be out of pocket a little, but that serves
or your carelessness. Be a good, prudent
e future, as you promise, and, then, how
n fancy, you will be in such a little para-

dise as Marksbury, with such angels' smiles come you whichever way you turn.

Your letter from Braybrook, by the b only just in time. Sam has given me an hou must make the best use of it—transcribe al worth rescuing from what I had put in the and write you more at length after we get mised daguerreotype. I did not say a word dear mother about the money, as she has b sad, you may suppose, about your leaving Nugent Harvey has drawn, I know, pre nearly all the spare cash at the banker's moment. That, however, don't matter a bi shares continue to improve as they are doing sent; and, they say, the "Gold Vein," rea make all our fortunes. So, you will please yourself indebted to me for the inclosed; and that, unless I am in the receipt of the san lawful interest of Great Britain, before the ex of twelve months after you take Castlemore, citors will be under the very unpleasant neces &c. I have a perfect right to make five per ten, if I can get it—for my little savings, as Nugent Harvey.

Really, that Nugent Harvey—you know for him?—is a very clever fellow! Nothing touches but seems to turn to gold. He ca ning in in a great bustle this morning, full

in about the "Gold Vein;" and to tell us—
Lord L——'s, and the Bishop's interest—
a partner in Saints and Angels, at last.
or you! Whatever game he undertakes, he
ise from it a winner. I never saw such a man!
but be Mrs. H——, what is to prevent
—— riding in her coach and four some day,
ose? The only thing wanting, I'm afraid,
noney—no, not if it would buy me a coach
—cannot purchase. O, Cecil if you knew
athe and detest that man! But you *do*
nough I could never make you think him
crite, the selfish, sordid, sensual hypocrite!
to me. And yet he would mark me for
Yes—think not I delude myself—mark
e sure of me—the cold-blooded calculator!
own. His power over your mother is quite
nary. He is so artful! I would often speak
, but, you know, she regards me as a child,
s herself on a knowledge of business, which
anaged to impart just as much of as suits
nds, and no further.
ower he has—what with powers of attor-
one power or another—is really terrible, if
honest. O Cecil, what a thought! Your
ys, 'she has never found him mistaken, or
in one single business instance.' I believe
old of her depends on it—and he will keep

it, there's little doubt of that—as long, too, as h
One slip on that score, he knows, would be his
fall. He is too clever for that. And now l
got his chair at Saints', I shall be more frig
than ever, every time I hear his knock. I
much for myself—though that thought often
little heavy, as well it may, Cecil, when I often th
what a hypocrite I am,—as for Lady Emma, an
dear mother's misplaced confidence—which th
tortures me sometimes more—oh, how much
than I can tell you! But lest, Cecil, your r
should ever have cause to repent these fr
speculations—for they do frighten me someti
I did venture a word or two to dear, goo
Vaughan, who came up yesterday, and had
chat with me; but you know what an easy, cre
unsuspicious creature he is; never seeing any
till it happens, and hardly even then—that I o
the same answer your mother always gives
'they had invariably found him scrupulously exa
punctual in his engagements.' So were Faun
and Exchequer Bill Smith, till they could be
longer. That excessive scrupulosity is a
title; and, like its twin-sister, mock-piety, m
very profitable, one would fancy, or there wou
be so much trouble made about it.

Mind you, I have nothing to allege again
new banker, as far as money matters have g

On the contrary, we get rich a-pace in his
ut nothing shall ever induce me to make
ation, if I can help it, in the Moorfield pur-
nd, if Lady Fitzherbert close for the Manor
nd lands—which Houghton Palmer, *entre*
d Nugent Harvey was all but settled—fancy
ud I shall be next time I go to the dear old
shed a tear over the orphans' infant home.
lking of home—what numberless blissful
ns, with all their shadows as well as sunny
es that sweet word recall! O Cecil! what
portable blank has your departure left in
g about me. There are the same smiles
me as ever—the same accents of affection
me me on every side—the same thought,
dness, and consideration, to anticipate every
d provide for every want; but where is the
object, the possession of which gave to one
their sweetest charm?—gone, gone! And
left for consolation? Ah!—I forgot—un-
girl!—Nugent Harvey, and the coach and

'is that all?' I think I hear you say. 'Is
o other thought but that of Nugent Harvey
coach and four brings comfort with it?'
s, Cecil, there is one—the thought—and a
ing thought it is—that you are happy—that
ar mother is happy—that good old Vaughan

is happy—that they are all happy,—that sha
my solace; and the contemplation of all the
and the visions of happiness we have so ofte
lighted to fill the future with; and, now, of
every movement—of the great, learned man yo
to become; of all the joys in store for you; o
golden opinions, and of the health-blowing bl
you are gathering at every turn; and the longi
the day when I may see with my own eyes—if
happen to be bright enough—for, spite of your
tion, a rebellious tear, do what I will, *will* stea
them now and then,—what a serious, sensible
tematic, good, amiable boy sweet Annie is m
you;—these shall be my solace, with the hope
amidst all your delights and distractions, you wi
quite forget, there is one little heart still be
fond and faithful as ever for you, and which
continue so to beat, unceasingly, unalterably, ti
bid it not. And then—when that day comes—
you bid it beat for you no more,—break indee
seek solace, suppose you, in the silent tomb?
no!—Nugent Harvey and the coach and fou
member! There's a refuge! No heart-bre
prospect that—whatever you may please to
yourself with, my dear Lord Fitzherbert.

And now, good gracious! I have but a m
more, Norton says, before Sam will be ready,
thousand thoughts struggling for utterance.

suppose I must try and keep them, then, time. The flower patterns, and all the other ou will see in the box with your books and which I thought would amuse Annie and —to whom say all the kind things you can for me, won't you? You will find lots of ndescripts, too, in one corner or another, e fancied might be useful; and you are to l, obedient, dutiful boy, mind, and be sure forget the quinine and the new flannels, ou feel the least lassitude and the cold even- n, you understand. But, if your dear mother ner present mind—and I think she will—to fortnight at Castlemore, as she talks about, be able to explain and enforce the vital of all this in *propriâ personâ*, as Nugent says;—and, oh! won't that be happiness, ?

ell, then, for to-day. And, now, longing an I can tell you for the promised daguerro- d to hear from you, who are such a good hether Annie really is the angel they picture whether she's as sweet-tempered as she's , and what coloured eyes she has got, and dmire that coloured hair; and all about rtrude; and your cousin—and whether he is some as they say he is; and the Vicar, and like him; and Esther Lawton; and what

sort of room you have got; and if you are co
able and happy—and everything else you thi
interest me,—

Believe me, as ever,

Your affectionate and devoted,

Be

P.S.—In the pocket of the portfolio yo
find a little blue velvet case, with a design in f
work I think you will admire. It may supp
place of the lost one, till I can fashion som
quite after my own heart, better worthy your
ance. And tell Annie, I can get her more
flower patterns at Howell's if she wants
Kindest regards from dear old Vaughan.

For some five minutes after reading Bella
letter, Lord Fitzherbert sat with one leg throw
the other, seemingly absorbed in its contents;
taking it up from his knee, he once more g
over the first part; then, calmly folding it up,
it at his side on the sofa, and, smiling on it
panion, bearing his mother's thin, fine superscr
proceeded leisurely, and without moving a mus
break the envelope; and, that done, to settle l
down resignedly to peruse as follows:

" Hill Street, August, &c.

t let Sam go, my dearest boy, without
u a few lines, though I have little to add
ve talked about on Tuesday, that will
u. Much as I feel your loss, it is a
nfort to me than I can express, to think
ent hands you are in, what a comfortable
will have, and the benefit your health,
not been as strong as I could wish of late,
from the healthy air of the fine open
out Marksbury. You must make a point,
nised me, of riding, or walking, when the
rmits, a certain distance every day, but
rdo it. You know the stress Dr. Cham-
on this. Savory has put up a treble
the quinine, and you must drop them a
you want a fresh supply, as it is sure to
om there. The new flannels are put in
nerinos; and, as you say—and I was so
ed to hear it—will be a great treasure to
he raw evenings set in. You will be fortu-
ve escaped cold from strange beds; but
ton is a careful body, and will see gladly,
to all your little comforts. Be very
w you expose yourself to draughts, which
those old country houses; and be sure, as
sed me, always to change your boots

and socks, if at all damp; and never drink thing cold when you are hot, which you a apt to do a great deal.

With a little application on your part, an Vicar to assist you, you will soon fetch up lost and realize, of that I am certain, all our expecta But you must not over do it. It is a regular s you alone want—a right method to go on ability—no, my child—you want not for ability from that! The Vicar's plan, I think, will supp that is needed; and, when you get a little use —and you must not be impatient—there is no with talents like yours, my dear boy, the acqui of what you require to fetch up—of the class particular—will be a task of very little diffi That is Nugent Harvey's opinion, too, you kno

Apropos of Harvey—you will be much pl to hear he has a junior partner's chair, at leng Saints and Angels', and is very proud about course, as you may suppose. This will b making—with a head and tastes for business lik The shares have increased four per cent. since left, and the 'Great Gold Vein' is to make us rich as Rothschild. Give me joy—I touched a ten per cent. dividend yesterday. Saints and A have unbounded confidence. Harvey will be a acquisition to them. Pretty well his all is su the concern. I suppose, he will be taking a l

Belgravia. He talks of one in Eaton
Entre nous, it will be Bella's own fault, I
f she don't ride in her carriage, one of
rs. For myself, you know, I could not
better home for her than Nugent Harvey
ve her—a splendid one I am certain! He
all the requisites now, I think, to make it
will please herself. I lay no restraint on
choice. She is at an age now to judge for
Hitherto she has shewn no preferences that
vare of—least of all for Nugent Harvey.
their dispositions are dissimilar in many
but in this I see no bar to mutual hap-
the wedded state. On the contrary, Bella
ften over-passionate and impetuous, like
-too much, occasionally, governed by mere
Nugent Harvey's moderation and matter
take it, would just be the thing wanted to
the excess of the sentimental and enthu-
nd neither would be a loser by the new
ut this, my own dear boy, is all hypothetical,
resent, only a fancy that crossed me at the
True, Harvey has made no secret at all
his admiration for Bella; but I should not
now the Belgrave house is being talked
Bella will soon be an essential party to
act. *Nous verrons*. And now, my dear boy,

need I repeat the many anxious hopes and w
nearest my heart for your welfare and happi
We have talked sufficiently together on those
jects. My heart is full of trust and confidence,
is of love and affection, in my own dear child.
will never disappoint the wishes of your m
of that I feel quite satisfied. Truth, strict, un
promising truth, under all circumstances, will b
fundamental principle of your every thought
action, as it ever was of your dear father's; and,
and morning, my little present of the clasped vo
at our parting, your best of all companions. An
His blessing but prosper your endeavours—wi
which, all our hopes and labours are in vain,—
not a wish will be left unfulfilled, my own dear
in the heart of

Your ever loving mother,

EDITH FITZHERBE

P.S. You will give Annie Lawton the accomp
ing note, with my love; and add my kindest reg
to the Vicar and to Esther. I have, likewise, s
few lines to Clermont, and to your Aunt, dear I
to whom convey my warmest assurances of affec
and the hope that, if we run down to Castlen
which I have great thoughts of doing, she wi
well enough to make one at the house-warm

the bye, that reminds me—we must write
immediately, or we shall all be laid up to
y. Bella must do it at once. Remember,
once suffered for it before. We have put
hing we could think of in the large trunk.
find some *eau de cologne* and black-currant
nges in the left hand corner, with the
ase and tooth-powder. Be very, very
at your linen is always thoroughly well
Ve are looking impatiently for the daguer-
nd all about the Parsonage. Once more,
d bless you! I think I have not omitted
; but my head is not what it used to
nake no complaints. His will be done, my
You know what a poor nervous body I am."

g twice perused his mother's letter from
g to end, Cecil drew a chair to the table;
r acknowledging, in suitable phrase, the
the three **Fifties**, and dwelling at sufficient
his postcript, on the value to him, in especial,
e all other earthly treasures, of the little
oughtful, generous, affectionate heart, so
all his own, and which had only to continue
faithful long enough, to receive at last the
rd due to its devotion,—scribbled off a whole
of filial duty and affection, embracing all
hic points of the promised daguerreotype, so

as to make it independent of Miss Bella's; having wound up with a becoming tribute loving, and faultless a parent's goodness,—f sealed, and directed the two epistles; and, p them in Mr. Jenning's hand for despatch b earliest London post, collected together his p and, the bank notes safely deposited in his p drawer, proceeded, with a light heart and s brow, to join Annie Lawton and Aunt Gerty i shrubbery.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE.

r did Cecil Fitzherbert crumple up the three otes, and thrust them, almost unseen, so fast waistcoat pocket?

looks the blood-stained right hand with nd shuddering on its blood-stained co-frère in he guilty left?

are the fruits of deception and dishonesty ter at the best?

Cecil Fitzherbert been asked five moments what sight on earth would most gladden his e had said the sight of three such nice pieces bank-paper, as, on opening affectionate Bella's were unfolded to his view. Or, he might, in ounded confidence of his expectations, have d four. And, yet—the wish fulfilled—the ined, and he could not bear the contemplation the fruits of his own labour; but must thrust t of sight, till the heart, regaining its wonted

equipoise—its *quantum suf* of selfishness insensibility, could beat superior to such sque impulses as had sent that foolish flush to his c and left them the moment after almost pa cold as marble. It is evident there was som connected with the fulfilment of Lord Fitzhe hopes that was not agreeable—a drawback where.

What a deal of pains selfishness takes to itself suffer ! for it is always suffering, and by i hands, too. Its self-inflictions are interminable yet, it is ever hugging itself in its clevernes exemptions—its acquisitions—its privileges—i quisites—its immunities. It is a bond-slave very tyrannical task-master. The dirty work to get through, the drudgery to undergo, the humblings to submit to, must be something frightful! And it is bound, to make matters to its master by its own act and deed alon could break the chain in a moment if it would no, the perquisites are too tempting, and the too degraded—it prefers to slave on. Freedom emancipate, would enfranchise, would ennoble i does not wish to be enfranchised, nor ennobl only wishes to continue to serve as long as it old master Self; and it will continue so to him, be the consequences what they may.

Selfish, and insensible to generous emotions

of Cecil Fitzherbert, unless it happened to
his humour to run riot in impulse and en-
yet, he could not regard the acquisition of
ains, seemingly, without a blush of shame,
a moment flushed his brow, and the next,
repulsed and unaccredited to the source
ce it came, left it pale again, and cold, and
as marble. Lord Fitzherbert was not
ensible, then, to shame? There are few
owever cold, and callous, and calculating,
o, with no eyes looking on to note their
ushes but their own. But shame is no
selfishness. Danger, disgrace, dishonour
ain; impending ignominy, nay, death, in
st terrors, itself, are powerless to root it
eart. There it clings like a foul leprosy,
ng cancer, defying aught but total disso-
f to loose it from its hold. And O what
pation! But whither shall the poor set,
reed from its mortal coil of sin and sorrow,
its rest?—whither?
is no match for selfishness, such as sent
nonitor from Cecil Fitzherbert's heart faster
me. He would none of him!
wanted he?"
—sorrow—contrition—confession—restitu-
entance—amendment—present humility;
ure triumphs—O how triumphant!"

"Pshaw!—that might do when all else f
The bird in hand—the prize in possession—the
crisp Fifties—were they not tangible facts? Fe
indeed! Tell him;—who were the sufferers i
life always?—the amiable and conscientious;—
the gainers?—the selfish and unscrupulous."

"But peace of mind—the peace that passe
understanding!" pleaded the monitor.

"Pshaw! The possession of the object n
is that not peace? The certain knowledge o
bank-notes in his waistcoat-pocket, was that
peace? The loss of them at that moment,
that be peace? Pshaw!" and, with this salvo f
conscience—the monitor having retired in desp
joyously beat the heart of Cecil Fitzherbert,
shone his eyes, and elastic went his steps, as, h
Clermont on the hill side, they wended their pl
way all together along the green slope; till, a
at 'the bower,' the *Cuyp* lay before them in
peaceful beauty; and, taking their seats on
emerald turf, a burst of passionate admiration
his Lordship replied to Annie's exclamations
light, that only wanted the true soul of a V
Pemberton, to have not only rung melodiously i
ears, but found its way in a moment to A
tender heart. As it was—she listened, and the
language of the poet was not lost upon her;
was but a copy—the life and soul and genuinen

al were wanting—it was but the reflection,
cold one, too, of the master light—so far, a
eral reflex of the truth, but not the truth itself
ple masterly, matchless, magic truth. And
ned from the copy to the original, and, en-
Clermont's earnest gaze fixed on her,
or some minutes into silence, leaving Aunt
the pastorals with his Lordship—contented
uch rather than to talk,—to find those pure
f delight in her own thoughts, sweeter to
an any, the rarest efforts of pen or pencil
rd her.

had not sat, luxuriating in the endless
peace and beauty the 'Cuyp' called up,
half an hour, when the sound of horses'
eard approaching up a bridle-path that ran
nty yards in the rear of 'the bower,' so over-
in summer by the luxuriant foliage of the
el-hedge on either side, which divided it
little flat of table-land on which they were
that it was impossible to distinguish whether
end or foe at hand, till close upon them;
ing up, Clermont ran to a peep-hole to re-
; in a minute after which the philosophical
d Socrates came into full view, and, walking
le, a tall, gentlemanly-looking, plainly dressed
carrying a portfolio in one hand, while, with
on Socrates' shoulder, patting him as they
ng, he chatted animatedly with the Vicar.

Starting to his feet, in a moment Lord Fitzh
was warmly grasping the hand of his new frien
fellow-traveller, the author-artist, Walter Pembe
and, having introduced him to the little bower
with more mutual exclamations of delighted su
at so unlooked for an addition to their happin
that moment, than it is possible we can enumera
now ;—

"I was promised a treat," said Pemberton,
fully raising his eyes to the Vicar's smile, and
turning to Annie and Aunt Gerty, and taking i
glance the whole 'Cuyp' with an artist's compreh
ken ; —"but this, truly, exceeds all my most
fancy could have pictured. In truth, enchantin

"You forgive me, then," smiled the Vicar,
being so selfish as to toil you up the hill after
long walk? I guessed we should find them he

"But what brought you round this way?"
Cecil. "Ah! with artist's wondrous sagacity
espied a *Gainsborough*, I'll warrant, on th
top?"

"I should not have grudged another five
tug," replied Pemberton, removing his hat fro
temples to let the south breeze fan them, and t
the seat on the emerald Axminster, as they cal
offered him between Annie and Aunt Gerty,—
such a treat as this. But it would have puzz
greater conjuror than I am, to have found his w
here, unguided, to such an enviably exclusive

as this—a privileged paradise—and a most
one, I can see. No. But with artist's
obliviousness, as I stood pondering by the
—in two minds, whether to take the right
or the wrong, on Thorney Brakes, I think
t,—I pictured a very grave, a very reverend,
gentlemanly personage, on a very venerable-
white pony that I saw approaching me, to be
of Marksbury, and no other; if so, I was
way. Most assuredly artistic sagacity like
'emberton's could not pourtray amiss—and
n, as a pleasing proof of it, you see."

ost unexpectedly agreeable *rencontre*, as you
pose," added the Vicar, addressing Cecil.
ow I always lug every one I can lay hands
ng to see us, this way to the Parsonage. I
too, you had all been on the hill side, and
e of catching you."

n speak for the safe conduct, so far," said
n, in answer to a question of Aunt Gerty's,
impossibility of the portfolio there, what-
r treasures it might contain, holding the
little indispensibles to make a suitable shine
bury,—" that Master Pickthorn assured me
Street valuables were all safe and sound in his
t Copsedenne; wherefore, I thought I might
o trust my *sac de voyage* among them, to
lly and without fail delivered, with the other
es, at the Vicarage before nightfall."

"Excellently well managed!" applauded Aunt G
"And you have walked all the way from Copsede
and such a broiling day!"

"Well, now I have landed you safe," said the
"there's no further fear. I'll jog on, and tell Est
the pleasuree we've got in store for her."

"And we'll be following you as soon as we
had a rest," called Aunt Gerty, as Socrates turn
into the bridle-path.

"And send Hannah, will you, papa dear,"
Annie, "to the Bury—to tell Rosalie, we'll go
dinner to Hazelcomb with our courtesies and c
bags?—please don't forget."

"That's right!" echoed Clermont. "The
shall have the things all ready for to-morrow. C
It will be fair-day, too, at Bonnington; and we'
the new colours for Tom and Jerry. Jerry
does seem very repentant."

"Tom and Jerry?" repeated Pemberton. '
the pair of ponies, do you mean, they were
ing so much of at Copsedenne,—that ran away
nearly killed—"

"Us both," explained Aunt Gerty; "us—
Annie and me. Yes—you may well shudder!
for that brave arm, hanging so modestly in the
there, it is harrowing, and that's true, to think,
it, Clermont, what might have been the c
quences? And the fame of it reached Copsed
has it?"

I am sure," smiled Cecil, "you would
untered ten times more peril than you did,
my cousin as happy as he must feel every
asts his eyes on this sling, now, wouldn't

ton raised his eyes, as Cecil ceased speak-
to Clermont's face, and then to Annie's,
n came a slight blush, as his deep, search-
grey eyes met hers.
?" asked Aunt Gerty, seemingly pondering
ient on the question.
itzherbert repeated it.
ermont is happy—and he must be—he
be—if he were not, I should hate him—"
unt Gerty, catching a glance from Walter
n as she spoke,—"what must *your* delight
an fancy how delicious it must be—to have
fortunate cause to make him so. O Cler-
am afraid you are not half grateful enough
oor crippled arm, Clermont Onslow."
n more grateful than you suppose," assured
. "My cousin knows it, too, don't you,

, honestly," laughed Cecil, "what would
for this highly fortune-favoured arm, crip-
is, if you could have it, cousin sweetest?"
l, jealous a little as I must own I *do* feel,"
lermont—"and who, but a stoic, would not

be?—it does seem to become you so well, a
make you so happy, that I really don't think I
find it in my heart to rob you of it."

"Bravo!" cried Pemberton.

"Well, that is very kind and disinterested, I
acknowledge," admitted Cecil. "Then, you thi
is becoming?"

"Very, indeed!" said Clermont.

"Don't his very affected *nonchalance* now b
him, Miss Annie," laughed Cecil. "He's a
dissembler."

"He admits that he *is* jealous," reminded An

"A redeeming point, that, certainly," smiled
berton.

"Well, so he does," conceded Cecil—"th
something."

"Something!" cried Aunt Gerty. "What
you more?"

The sling had got a little out of place.

"Will you let me tie it a-fresh?" offered Cler
"Stay—there—that is more comfortable, isn'
and not less engaging, eh, Miss Annie?"

"Delicious!" exclaimed Cecil. "Thank
Now, then, I won't tease you any more."

"O yes, do, if you like—if you call that teas
returned Clermont, encountering Annie's eyes o
"I shall get over it all the better."

"Don't you think," asked Annie, addressing V

n, "we have a right to be very proud of
retreat here?"
d, do I!" exclaimed Pemberton, gazing ad-
round him. "And that is the Parsonage
ow?"
nd a funny little bit of a place it looks
don't it?" replied Annie. "It's grander,
great deal, when you get close to it. From
ks a mere nutshell, don't it?"
e elysium of a nutshell on earth, neverthe-
imed Cecil, "as human heart, in the right
d covet—wherein to find rest and refuge
eartless world."
said Pemberton, "do *you* say so already?
late you. Where the crust and the cold
would go down sweetly?"
about that, I don't know," smiled Cecil;
vton has not yet put us to so extreme a

hen, till she does," said Pemberton, "who
whether the heart *is* in the right place,
ng?"
quite sure that mine would not be in the
at all," observed Aunt Gerty, rising, and
moving homewards, as Marksbury town
k five,—"if they had forgotten to get dinner
us to-day; for, if you are all contented
crust and cold cup,' as you call it, permit

me to say, I feel much more inclined to-d
wing of roast chicken and a glass of home-
and, what's more, have a strange whim in n
that Annie thinks so, too; and, moreover,
shall succeed in inducing you to come over p
to the same opinion. Or, if you prefer it, I
no possible objection to your being accommo
a side table with a cup of delicious crystal col
for which we are famous, and a nice stale cru

"Well, I don't know myself," admitte
berton, "that it would be altogether the best
ask me a particularly great favour to-day,
have had my dinner. Still, I insist"—

"Still, you insist," anticipated Annie, "tha
there was a spot on earth where—sitting on
violet-bank—of course contemplating our h
over the chicken and home-brewed—the cr
cold cup would go down sweetly,—it is ther
there?"

"Which is it to be, then," laughed Cecil
merry-thought, or the mouldy crust?"

"Well, to please Miss Gertrude Lawton,"
Pemberton,—"though, mind, I don't budge
from my doctrine—just to please Miss Gertr
think I'll try and pick a bit;"—and, arrive
Parsonage.—

"This is indeed a delightful surprise fo
day!" welcomed Esther Lawton, with beami

arms open. "And you walked all the
rom Copsedenne this scorching day? You
amished! Come in—come in. You got
s, then—that's right. The Vicar knew
er well, he says, at Christ Church."
-senior optime of my year," said the Vicar,
ily up; "and a sharp race, faith! it was
s."
e often heard my brother talk rejoicingly
happy days of *Alma Mater*," replied
.
were among some of the happiest of my
responded the Vicar. "Your brother
a splendid market for his honors. They
h him, as with many, *insignia, et, præterea,*

an have nothing to complain of, on that
reed Pemberton.
were a silk gown the summit of his
I suppose he would not have much on any
oined the Vicar.
ere any, the least harm, in his looking
e woolsack?" asked Cecil.
at all that I see," replied Pemberton, "if
own don't sit any the less proudly on him,
ot get the ermine."
would it were so with us all," sighed Aunt
ow happy we should be! I declare, now,

some of my old dresses become me ten tim
than my new ones; and, yet, if Selina M
disappoint us to-morrow, Annie, love—do yo
I'll ever be seen again at church in that ol
poplin? You see, then, if I will do!"

"And the Cuyp?" asked the Vicar.

"Wants but the heart in the right place,
Fitzherbert says," answered Pemberton, "t
that heart, I think, can wish for."

"That is all!" responded Esther, with a si

"It must be a heart of strange and un
mood indeed! I think," said Pemberton, "th
be partaker of the sweet joys so lavishly s
around on every side in this lovely valley to
happy, and feel otherwise."

"It depends on the interpretation," rep
Vicar; "on the sort of eye by which they
templated, and the heart that thereunto respo

"You think we poets and painters revel
warm imaginations?" said Pemberton.

"I am too much of both, in my heart,
replied the Vicar, "to give an unbiassed
I'm afraid."

"I think I could pitch my tent in such
nook as this," said Pemberton, "and not
wish beyond."

"Oh! and so could I," exclaimed Cl
"I feel I should be as happy as the day wa

good feeling too," approved the Vicar,
open, honest enthusiasm of his pupil
nal smile.

day-dream merely, Clermont, with you,
ded Aunt Gerty.

reams, I suppose," observed Pemberton,
Clermont's fervent exclamation with a
look, "are mere day-dreams only—
as we please to make them so, or not."

ng to the realization obtained, you mean,"
" by eye and heart, on better knowledge."
is through the eye the heart is won,"
mberton, " what safer objects could it covet
e joys, for peace, and all the spirit-soothing
hat flow from it,—than such as these;
ing from nature up to nature's God—"
exclaimed the Vicar, " were those all that
he carnal eye and heart of man—required
emplation of His works—the recognition
tness and goodness—the adoration of His
fulfilment of His laws—the perfect
to His will,—no doubt they might envy
sbury the peace that *should be* ours."

here's the half hour striking, I declare,"
r, addressing Pemberton. " Dinner will be
moment—and I'm sure you must want it.
ge—yes, yes—I remember—the Vicar told
ming by the waggon. Well, Clermont

can lend you anything you want. Your room is not very *grand*; but it's airy, and quiet—w in all last week, so you needn't fear—and a nice peep from the window over the chu and Roxberry hills. We have placed the outside—right—you prefer it?—so do I— much more healthy and refreshing, isn't it, in su You'll soon pick up at Marksbury. Don't yo Lord Fitzherbert looking already better? I he is! It's wonderful what the Marksbury air Now, go then—for I'll warrant it has giv a famous appetite for dinner."

"Good, kind, hospitable dame!" exclaimed Pemberton, as Cecil and Clermont put possession of his room. "Certes—you mu into the rural nooks, still, for good old cheer, and good old English welcome that its best zest. Find you them not there,—wh by Jove! can you seek for them in merry E now-a-days?"

"Steady, steady there! gentle Master with your good old times, indeed, and jovial makings. Think you, we of this our da not how to eat, drink, sleep, and get fat, as our forefathers? Tut, tut, man! Count us dozen of your jolliest old stagers, who made bower ring again with their glorious feasts and fi and we will engage, Master Walter, to prod

t our dinner, a genuine fresh modern Bloater
with paunch and purple-nose to beat them
Pshaw! Master Walter,—the old ones did
Sir, by halves. We moderners know a
worth two of that. We do not pay the
aster for nothing, we can tell you. When we
fatten *our* pig, sweet Master Walter, we are
nore scientific in the business,—we shut him
alone, Master Walter—straw him down
ably—feed him well—give him a scratching
, if he likes it,—and, filling his dear old belly,
grunt and guttle—and guttle and grunt—
himself—till he burst, if so it please him,
Walter."

s understanding the The First Law of Nature,
not, sweet Master Walter?

CHAPTER VI.

BACHELOR'S HALL.

DINNER over, and Annie and Rosalie Bai
ready with their courtesies and cotton bags, th
sonage little party—excepting only the Vica
had letters to despatch, and Esther Lawton, w
her own equally important duties on her han
evening that would brook no delay—set off,
tip-top spirits for Hazelcombe.

Why Huntworth Lowndes, a haler or hear
of old English oak than whom Marksbury co
shew, nor twenty miles around it, with his ba
registry clearly laying to his score but eight an
summers, more or less, should have been calle
village and about, old Huntworth, is inexpl
unless, it might be, that, like many rich b
uncles, having a dutiful nephew christened aft
and by common consent—if he did not ma
inherit his money-bags as well as beagles, he n
then had Master Huntworth down to the old

r distinction, the neighbours dubbed him
ghts of seniority. At all events, it never
ruffle the hardy fox-hunter in the least,
hat they would. Nay, he chuckled at the
Drawing himself up to his height, which
where about six feet without his boots, and
his broad, brawny chest,—"never care,"
cry; "as long as the old boy's sound, wind
enough to ride thirty miles to cover and
—be in at the death nine times out of ten
nk, and sleep without sick or sorry nerve in
-let the numskulls chaff and chatter as they
When the young ones could do that, and
t, was time enough, and over, for him to be
ut for a wife—before it was too late."
untworth "would give him a lease, yet, of
rs, before there was the slightest necessity
his head about such nonsense."

mbe House was a fine old structure enough
; forming, with its grounds and gardens,
undred acres, or thereabouts, in a ring-fence
ichly wooded and well watered, as compact
a little property as Marksbury had to boast
h larger as 'The Grange' was, the Squire oft
stful look at Hazelcombe; for, though *his*
vas, in all conscience, all that mortal heart
n for, yet, was it not given even to Squire
e to be the happiest man, as people said he

ought to be, on earth. Had there been no
combe, how it might have turned out ther
saying; but, unquestionably, Hazelcombe w
thorn in the Squire's rosy couch, though th
the Vicar took to pluck it out, and prove to h
sin of suffering from, were most affectionate a
ceasing.

For any elegance or architectural beauty
shape, viewed with modern eyes, Hazelcombe
had little to be regarded. It would have puzz
Charles Barry, or Mr. Cubitt exceedingly, t
made anything passable of it, without pulling i
and building it up again; and then it had local
to have set George Robins, or Brooks and He
their wit's end to do simple justice to it.
suited the old sportsman excellently well. He
not have had a brick altered, nor a path turne
it put another three hundred a-year into his br
pockets, or Miss Rosalie herself had gone d
her little knees, and implored him with
wheedling eyes and coaxing tongue of hers fo
an-hour. If it wanted elegance, it was so
commodious enough, and warm, and weathe
and, as far as fox-hunting taste, and Mrs.
could make it, comfortable, too, as regarded
was substantial. There was the appearance o
means, of well-to-do in its broadest, boldes
whichever way you turned; no lack of the

no shadow of a fear of the pot not kept
of the "crust and cold cup." It was a
d that made you feel fatter to go round it,
lean you might be; fruits of industry
y to overflowing smilingly greeting you at
rn; not hoarded and monopolized, but so
, so varied, so ungrudgingly distributed, so
and universally enjoyed—you felt that they
to yourself almost as much as to their
But there was a dullness, nevertheless, a
extreme plainness, yet heavy richness about
g in the house and about it, that did not
at all with Miss Rosalie's ideas, and which
Mrs. Rodney out terribly, every time Miss
avoured them with a visit, to know how to
air of gaiety over, "to please such a little
iresome torment!"

Rodney had been busy all the day, doing
could; as Mr. Lowndes had told her it was
would have a visit from "the torment, and
-a real live Lord; so, she must look about
get the best tea things out, and something
elegant for supper, and the silver punch
dy, and a better nosegay for Miss Rosalie
antel-piece, or she'd plague his very life out
questionings and quizzings." Accordingly,
ss Rosalie and the rest arrived, there was no
he should be a little surprised, to see how

very complete, and comfortable, and even gay, e
thing looked, though there was not yet a Mrs. L-

Huntworth was in high key. Every thing
spired to make him so. Lord Fitzherbert's exp
presence had kept Mrs. Rodney in a flutter of e
ment since sun-rise, which was a pleasant change
made the old house quite alive again. Walter
berton, who, with an artist's eye, saw beauti
every thing, and especially, at that moment,
patriarchal old half-blind beagle extended on the
and was a good listener, hit the old Beagler to
Annie was forced to acknowledge that "his M
grapes and water-melons really did beat Hump
hollow;"—Aunt Gerty "only wondered how he
possibly do it all without a little wife;"—Cler
"only hoped he might have such another housek
as Mrs. Rodney, that was all, when he required
and, as for Rosalie,—"if this were the way
could see plainly it was high time for her to be
ing out for herself. She could get a situatio
hoped and trusted, if put to it, as well as
people; she was not going begging, not she.
Mr. Lowndes supposed it was correct to hav
room strewed all over with unhung hunting pic
and dogs, and sticks, and whips, and nothing
couple of hideous china owls on the mantle-
except that great, vulgar farmer's nosegay of p
and Turk's-cap-lilies, and not an ornament c

a book, nor a paper, but 'The Sporting
,' and 'Bell's Life,' and the chairs standing
ainst the walls, poor things! all in a row,
wkward squad of the 73rd at exercise, after
on—he was very much mistaken, she could
She said nothing, but this she would say
bt Hazelcombe *might* be made a habitable
ugh, with a little taste. But, O, dear! any
see, with half an eye, there was no Missus.
business of hers, but that was how it was;
! she pitied him exceedingly!"

heless, never did Bachelor's Hall, to judge
ances—as Miss Rosalie was bound to admit
Rodney on the sly—do more credit to its
ber than on that day. Delicious were the
coffee, the *brioche* rolls, and honey cakes,
ge crumpets; and, no less so, the whip-
bola d'amour, and *petits biscuits soufflés à*
; and well might Mrs. Rodney's brown eyes
hear of the unqualified approval bestowed
by his Lordship. It was an evening that
ed of by Mrs. Rodney for many a day to
l to leave little fear on her master's mind,
there might be worse things in the world
g absolute lord and master of Hazelcombe
delicately directed and done for by such an
hand as Louisa Rodney.

rst shades of evening were closing over

them; but the air, loaded with the perfumes
numerable flowers, was so balmy and refreshing
the blazing day it had been, that the one wish s
to be to enjoy as much of it as possible befo
night dew made it no longer safe to remain
doors; and Aunt Gerty taking fright, as Hunt
got on his favourite hobby, politics, with Walter
berton and Clermont, and drawing Annie and
Fitzherbert after her for a shrubbery stroll—t
Beagler, and Rosalie, with the Author-Artis
Clermont, were left alone in the laurel bower, to
the affairs of the nation by themselves.

"Would not education be the surest and
means," asked Clermont—in reply to an obser
of Huntworth Lowndes on the degraded state
English peasantry—"to ameliorate the condit
the labourer—by enlightening his understandi
enable him to know his own interests, and ta
social position to which he is entitled as a r
being?"

"And from which," rejoined Pemberton,
think it is chiefly, if not altogether, ignoranc
now excludes him?"

"Yes, in a great measure," replied Cle
"from what I daily see of him."

"You do think him a rational being?"
Pemberton.

"One of the most rational, if made so,

o think, of God's creatures; and, if rightly
one of the most serviceable," answered

t can be a better proof of it," sided Hunt-
han just to look at Roxberry, and down at
gs. Why, there isn't one out of fifty of
s great A from a bull's foot; and about as
heir God as that beagle bitch."
don't they teach them, then?" wondered

'em!" cried Huntworth, "they do send
onaries pretty thick among 'em, and the
the teachings; but they don't go the right
ehow, about it. Just as well chuck the
ds on that couch-heap yonder, and expect
read."
t is to be done?" asked Rosalie.
one thing that will ever clean the land for
Miss Rosalie."
overnment plan, you mean?" presumed

's it—that's the secret!" cried Huntworth.
ough, if they've any honesty in 'em."
, I am not so sanguine," said Pemberton,
hat. Abroad, in those countries, our nearest
rs especially, where the peasantry are best
d and best off, the Church, I fancy, has much
do with their interests, temporal and eternal,
pearances, than the State."

"That may be in Catholic countries," adm
Huntworth, "where the state is subservient t
Church—where there is one Church, and *only*
for all ranks, and parties, and creeds, and de
nations whatever; there the Church has the po

"And uses it, so far, beneficially for its poor,
it not?" asked Pemberton. "In Protestant En
—to become rather more catholicised in spirit,
the increase of knowledge, it is to be hoped, t
is at present—that power the Church has not
therefore cannot use it. The State has it, but it
not use it to effect—how is this?"

"It can, if it will," replied Huntworth.

"Perhaps it is too independent," suggested
mont. "It seems certain that it *don't*."

"We are all a vast deal too independent,
afraid, in merry England," smiled Pemberton. "
fine English *independence*, as they call it, is a
pregnant social curse we labour under. W
commands power and influence—England has g
Her upper classes are well-satisfied to let well a
but look at her lowest. The Church *cannot*
them; and the State *may not*—or *will not*, rat

"A little more unanimity of purpose, and
tian co-operation of action, you imagine, would
well?" asked Rosalie.

"Power somewhere is wanted — that's
evident," growled Huntworth. "Give it wh
best used."

is the difficulty," feared Pemberton.
difficulty?" cried Huntworth, getting on
ite stilts; "nothing's difficult, I tell you,
tinists and red-tapists."
the wiseacres come to have to do the work,"
emberton; "and, then, some of them, who
, I'm thinking, sing somewhat small when
em to the collar."
the results of administrative incapacity,"
luntworth, fairly set off, and Rosalie being
erested. "See—if you are not blind and
't they stare at us in the face, Sir, at every
w, just to take a case, Miss Rosalie—the
ttle politician, by the way, in all Marksbury,
ozen of her father,—just to take a case, to
dolts some of 'em are, and how they want
er.—The Honourable Mr. Septimus Sine-
—it's a large family that family of the
—seventh nephew of old Lord Humdrum
whose ancestors—peace be with 'em!—
in every administration since Cromwell,—
o doubts it? have been in the peaceable
of his official consequence and two
a-year at this moment—pottering on at
g-trot—nothing seeing, nothing hearing—
ourse what touches number one—nothing
nothing caring—and the nation—the old
anapes—running head over heels to ruin,

and his own department, in particular, the ver
of ignorance and laziness—doing nothing f
grub but bowing and blarneying, and dotting
and docketting, and tallying, and tying u
botching, and blundering, till he was defunct,
earned a pension,—if it hadn't been for those
eyed, painstaking, persevering gents, Messrs. Wa
and Fix, good luck to 'em!—who—"

"Urged of course," caught up Rosalie, "
purest motives—patriots every inch of them."

"That's it! that's it!" cried Huntworth,
recovered breath, and going full-tilt,—"the
the good vessel from the breakers, on whic
for them, she was hurrying to destruction
steering her, crew and all, safe and sound, in
harbour, if they would but be piloted by tho
know the whereabouts so much better than th
themselves;—came to the necessary, but pain
solution, as an indispensable preliminary, you se
Rosalie? to depose and do up the said Honoura
Septimus; seeing that he is incompetent—an irr
able limb of the old Humdrum stock—with
and wasted—and worn out—utterly valueless

"Yes, now you see, Mr. Clermont, I hope,"
rupted Rosalie, "the essence and marrow
Honourable Mr. Septimus' sin? Please to o
Mr. Pemberton—the very head and front of
fending was nothing more nor less than seein

The Honourable Mr. Septimus Sinecure
ulties, Mr. Pemberton; the public, or, what
me thing, the Messrs. Watchem and Fix,
; *ergo*, Mr. Pemberton—nay, excuse me,
allowed—*ergo*, the Honourable Mr. Sep-
ecure is a fool,—well if he's not a knave,—
ddle—and an idiot—and an imbecile! Or,
rly contemptible, Mr. Clermont, something
it—a piece of worn-out, worm-eaten old
-gone by—used up—all very well in its day;
only fit to be put out of sight, out of mind,
way—do you hear, Mr. Pemberton?—with
useless old lumber, up into some dark
corner, where it may hide its diminished
make way, Mr. Clermont Onslow, for its

how does getting rid of the Honourable Mr.
help our education scheme?" asked Cler-
iling.

is way, or, rather, on this principle, if so it
ou, Mr. Clermont," explained Rosalie—
h seeming well satisfied to leave the prin-
all in such able hands.—"We would have
o do, Mr. Clermont, you see, with persons,
, who see difficulties, imperceptible to the
e world. Thus, Mr. Clermont Onslow, you
erceive—there could exist no difficulties,
ere all blind who were appointed to watch
Therein, you will allow, Mr. Pemberton,

and his own department, in particular, the
of ignorance and laziness—doing not
grub but bowing and blarneying, and
and docketting, and tallying, and
botching, and blundering, till he
earned a pension,—if it hadn't
eyed, painstaking, persevering
and Fix, good luck to 'em!

"Urged of course," ca
purest motives—patriots

"That's it! that's
recovered breath, an
the good vessel fr
for them, she w , nave you? W
steering her, cre rty.
harbour, if th on—deposed—dethro
know the wh ed—done up—utterly pr
themselves; exclaimed Pemberton, "aye,
solution, a of them!"

Rosalie? up with all the other old rubbish
Septim room,—Jubilate, love!" cried Rosal
able li be with them!" said Annie. "In
and with such, enviable the lot of poor half
Sancho there, the beagle."

"Ah!" said Pemberton, "true,—many a
patriot, in his day, might envy the end of
favourite. Sancho has nothing to reproac
master with—not he—on the score of ingratitu
poor old Sancho?"

his pathetic appeal of Walter
drawn from Rosalie, who
or a speech appropriate,
appearance of Mrs.
ile at the glass-
ble required
iends in
nversation,
all break Mrs.
er salad sandwiches
Miss Annie and Miss
ıy arm if you please. Gen-
me the favour to follow. And
ou can please yourself. The turret
striking ten presently, when 'The White
oes her rounds. Mrs. Rodney can accommo-
u, I dare say, with a warm shawl and bonnet
eel cold; and, if you get frightened, you have
call loud enough, and, I dare say, some one
sure to hear you."

! that reminds me, you have a ghost story to
' said Lord Fitzherbert; and insisting that, if
osalie felt disposed for a peep at 'The White
he would bear her company—which at once
the matter,—Huntworth gave in, declaring,
at would never do—he wouldn't answer for the
ences of madness like that, not he!" and lead-
way with Annie and Aunt Gerty, Rosalie
Lordship brought up the rear together.

"Eh—ah—ghost-story?" cried Huntworth, a beaming glance at the silver punch-bowl, s forth most odoriferous fumes from the centre elegant little cold collation prepared to astonis Rosalie—"eh?—ah!—who told you I had a story to tell?"

"Your gay, gallant Cornet—don't you rem —Charlie Ferrers, of the Seventy-third?"

"Ah! Charlie boy? By Jupiter! yes, ye Charlie boy—pretty Rachel's intended? Havn him for an age. Wild dog, Charlie. Many spree we've had together. Terrible dog, amon women! Charlie Ferrers."

"I can fancy," cried Rosalie, spreading o dress to deposit her stylish little person near t mont;—"yes, and a wild one, too, somebod I could mention, besides Charlie. Oh, you deceive me! so, don't attempt it."

"Ah! and Charlie told you did he?" laughed worth, throwing up the window-sash as far as it go, and giving some order aside to Mrs. R "Yes, that *was* a genuine ghost, by jingo, i there was one! You may laugh, Miss Rosa Miss Annie, you'll be pleased to divide Aunt Ge and Lord Fitzherbert, or there'll be mischief as fate,—and Mr. Pemberton, do me the fav take the seat there, nearest the window, as you poet, and may like to see the moon rise—and knows but 'The White Lady' may chance to con

you've enough to do just now with the
e—do you hear, Master Clermont? without
f white, or any other young ladies, Master
And now, you'll be just settling yourself
wn there by my left hand, Miss Rosalie,
nt—do you understand? And, when we've
thful and a glass or two all round—if Lord
t's in the humour—and you—you little
—will just promise to behave yourself,—I'll
n call to mind the story of Charlie and 'The
dy;' and then try and get a wink of sleep
any of you, if you can."

outhful enjoyed, and the glass or two gone
d his Lordship—as the moon rose over the
and shed its soft, melancholy, meditative
ugh the dark wainscotted old room, faintly
every object with its elfin beams, and con-
all sorts of grim and fantastic images
he trees and shrubs on the dim, deep-
lawn—declaring he never felt so inclined
st-story in his life; and Annie and Aunt
ng exactly of the same mind; and Walter
n so placed as to give the alarm, should any-
ur, supernatural or otherwise; and Clermont
gh to do to look on and watch the proceed-
is client; and Rosalie somewhat reduced to
; state of ghost-decorum:—

, then," began Huntworth,—"let's see—it

must be now a good ten years or more ago—
the time the Seventy-third were fresh-formed, a
their new colours—yes, that must have been a
—that Charlie Ferrers—as good looking a fe
will say, as ever sat a saddle, or drained a stiff g
was down among us here, playing the deuce w
girls' hearts, and bagging the birds with his
Joe, till old Rokeby was 'mad all but,' and sw
they went on that rate, there wouldn't be a br
—they'd see—to breed on the manor. He
thirty years keeper there, off and on, at Haze
and about, and he'd never thought to live to
game treated that cruel. Those yeomanry cock
plague take 'em—would be the death of him.'

"'Catch that Jem Shipton, then,' cried
'Jem bagged more head in a week than his
in a month; catch Jem, if he could, and hav
grumbling.'

"Roke scratched his head. That Jem wa
point. Roke knew Master Charlie was right
there. Roke had had a tussle or two with Je
hadn't forgotten it. Few did—come to the gr
Jem. Jem 'wasn't to be bamboozled, if the co
were, not he! There wasn't game enough fo
however—that was clear.'

"What was to be done? Down they ca
day, to Charlie—and down, by night, to Jem
would be Roke's death—see then if it would
a stop wasn't put to it somehow.'

ill Jem snapped his fingers. It was an
that, wasn't it, on Roke's temple? and
by's left arm was still useless in a sling.
was a desperate dog—could bite, and bite
as well as bark.—Ah! look," stopped
, suddenly leaning forward—"what was
ossed the fir-clump?"
were simultaneously strained towards the
. Walter Pemberton "couldn't make out
ad had his attention fixed on it—was
saw something move—he could not be
-something palpably moved. It might
only the playing of the shadow, as the
e swayed gently to and fro the branches of
ng black pines, that stretched their great
as if shaking hands together, across the
move something *did* across the walk—that
."
and nonsense—ridiculous!" said Rosalie,
chair a little closer to Huntworth's, and,
ands tight clasped together in her lap,
eyes rivetted on the spot.
resumed Huntworth,—"what was to be
ndered Roke—and "what was to be done,"
Charlie.
my wig!' cried Charlie, 'I know, then,
e done. Hit it by Jove! If none of you
en—I'll tackle Master Jem.'
it; he come to the grip with Jem!' cried

Roke. 'Lor bless un!—it wasn't two men, no, n three, could master Jem.'

"'Fiddle de dee! A dashing cornet in the 73 show the white feather to a skulking poache Pshaw!'

"'Well, but, in course, Mr. Charlie would hav helping hand or two—in course? If he didn't, see he wouldn't be doubled up, sure as life, the fi round. There was Dick Shotter, and Mark Hanc would tackle a mad-bull. Jem would be astir ag on Thursday.'

"Mr. Charlie 'would condescend to permit Master Roke, and Master Shotter, and Mas Hancox's company to the field of action—had objection to that,—where, concealing themselves they best might, and best knew how, entirely fr any participation in the fray—they should, from th ambush certainly, if they pleased, be lookers on, a see fair play.'

"'Mr. Charlie wasn't so mad—would Mr. Char only be advised?'

"'No, Mr. Charlie wouldn't—Mr. Charlie was pig-headed as Master Roke himself, where he'd on made up his mind. Would Master Roke and men be ready the night after to-morrow, then?'

"'Mr. Charlie was stark-staring mad.'

"'Mr. Charlie begged to differ in opinion.'

"'He'd be doubled up, then, first round.'

"'He'd take his chance of that.'

day night came. As sweet a night as
Pemberton will excuse me for the sake of
ent—as poet, or poacher could desire.
h, Master Roke and his men were at their
e ten acre copse—safe and snug cribbed
dgers in their burrows.'
—one—and two, Miss Rosalie, had the
clocks told.—Hark!—see—there again—
m living," exclaimed Huntworth, grasping
rist,—"look, look!"
e so foolish!" cried Rosalie, turning pale
you made my heart quite jump. Only
—you know that—out there—baying at

ne sees or hears something, I'll be sworn,"
orth, under his breath. "Keep a sharp
ere—some of you."
xcessively ridiculous—how nonsenscial!—
it's nothing—you know it isn't," fired
go on—go on."
see. Well, twelve—one—and two had
ntinued Huntworth—Clermont having re-
ne glasses—"had struck, more than twenty
d Master Rokeby was beginning to think,
ad somehow got scent,—when, bang! went
in thirty yards of 'em—and, presently,
g! went another, and another. It was time
There was Jem, sure as death, the very

man, large as life, and, may be, a little lar
then to Master Rokeby's eyes, as the shado
big bulky person, with the moon behind him
reached to within five yards of where they lay
Jem stood, loading, while the other five of '
bundling the birds away quick out of sight.'

"'Hold hard! Look out! Where was Mr.
Thought how it would be—had gone to sle
bet—or got sick of it, likely—and cut to b
sort of use waiting for him no longer—w
devil could *he* do?—all bosh!—let 'em out, a
'em! Hold hard!' Creeping along on thei
Rokeby and his men had cleared the burro
now within half a shot, were just starting
feet, right at 'em,—when, suddenly rising as
the bowels of the earth, appeared, close behin
colossal figure of ghastly aspect—draped in wh
head to feet—and not less than nine feet high
coming gliding on them within ten yards—
terror burst all of a moment from the gang
throwing down their spoils, and taking to the
the 'White Lady' was left, without a blow, un
master of the field. But not before her gho
violability had been put to the test—mark
Lord—by Jem, the sacrilegious villain! who, s
wheeling round in his flight, as if a thought
him, and seeing a clear coast, clapped his pi
idiot! to his shoulder—took a dead aim—

ng her hand in token of defiance, off she
ne spot where Jem stood aghast—no doubt
o sacrifice him to her vengeance. But
n as fast as legs could carry him—over
ditches, on—on, on—for life or death—
witched, as well he might—never once
till, beaten and breathless, he rushed like a
into his kennel at Fernleigh; and throwing
his bed—there Jem lay with the brain fever
s after—ask Dr. Dunlop if he didn't."
aster Rokeby?" inquired Pemberton.
no more for certain, to this day, than old
t I know off," said Huntworth, "where
Lady' went to. When he got here back
e was Charlie snoring in his bed, sound as
, do what Roke would—and he plagued
—he never could get more out of Charlie,
e felt excessively obliged to her ghostship's
iour, in sparing him a broken head—and
he expense of going into mourning."
ur pheasants?" asked Lord Fitzherbert.
om that blessed night have gone to roost
snug, every bit of it, for all I know to the
my fowls."
at is 'The White Lady' who walks every
n o'clock, is it?" laughed Cecil.
hark!—not so loud, my Lord. There—
I live!—look—look—by the fir-clump—

"Where—where?" stammered Cecil, th
leaving his face cold as marble for a mom
straining his gaze in the direction of the fir
"I can see nothing."

"No, nor any one else," said Rosalie,
trembling. "Do sit down—do, Mr. Lownd
have done with your rubbish—I can't th
you can be so ridiculous! Don't you see
teeth chattering?—sit down, do—and ther
Fitzherbert won't get a wink to-night—do hav

"You are killing Miss Rosalie—don't you
are?" giggled Cecil. "We shall never get h
alive—see if we shall—without an escort
Seventy-third."

"Look—look!"—there, said Pemberton, al
audibly, while the heart of even Aunt Gertr
for a moment a pulse faster;—and, sure en
colossal white figure, of awful height, and
striking aspect, was palpably seen to glide ac
gravel-path—and pausing an instant, as if ir
the next, to vanish slowly among the shrubs.

Rosalie uttered a faint scream; and, keep
eyes fixed on the spot, clung for support t
worth's arm. Lord Fitzherbert's unusually
voice belied his apparent *sang-froid*, as he
laugh it off, as a monstrous clever trick. Aun
"begged that the shawls might be fetched, as
no mind at all to stop till the moon went
and going, so late, across that lonely heath-fiel

had been attending to something that was saying at the moment, and had seen " which was exceedingly provoking, as she know, above all things, what a real ghost

Pemberton was, unfortunately, just a mo- late, too; for, studying a beautiful effect, oon left half of Aunt Gertrude's face in half in shadow, the ghost was gone when lie screamed out; but perhaps they might peep at it as they walked home; and, if so, idea in his head for a fine picture, that he would just suit the panel there over the ce some day—if Miss Rosalie would only n with a sitting,—and Mr. Lowndes, too, ind the price.

gain!" cried Huntworth.

you think," whispered Rosalie, somewhat from her fright, and relinquishing her " it would be as well if you asked Mrs. hen, to sit instead? 'Twould be so much y, wouldn't it, and *in keeping?*"

grin played on Huntworth's honest face. now, Annie dearest, to business, if you ore we separate;" saying which, Rosalie e by the hand, and, advancing demurely Mr. Lowndes, each dropped a low bob- s Rosalie extended the mouth of the to the utmost stretch of the strings; and,

looking up beseechingly in his face, waited t
of her delicate diplomacy.

"You little wheedling beggars!—you arr
domestic nuisances!" cried Huntworth, hardl
maintain his gravity, and thrusting his left
and fore-finger into his waistcoat pocket—"U
trick of it, by Jove! as well as any of 'em. Th
dropping something heavy, wrapped up in
bank-note paper, into the bag,—"there, g
with you both about your business! Con
tormenting honest hardworking folks any m
your bobs and bags—and,—" But "Tha
kindly, Sir"—and "Thank you kindly, Sir,"
true mendicant twang, were too much! Hu
could stand it no longer, and, roaring out la
scared the "two little domestic nuisances
flight out of his presence into the back
behind the great Indian screen; there to cou
gains, and giggle, as crowingly as any one o
at the success of their plans; which ap
perfectly satisfactory, and Lord Fitzherbert
impatient—after a little while—

"I think we might venture out now, Annie
proposed Aunt Gerty—the shawls and bonnets
been brought, and on, some half hour, while
and Huntworth were coquetting on, and maki
da capo about the ghost.—"I suppose 'The
Lady' does no despite to peaceable honest folks
harmlessly on their way?"

d never heard that she did," assured Hunt-
But he should be sorry to lead them into
. Nay, for that, he didn't mind seeing them
harm's reach, to the wood gate;" and, taking
ff went Aunt Gerty with Walter Pemberton
rt; Cecil following with Annie on his arm;
having stopped a moment to exchange
ts and adieus with Mrs. Rodney—relying
wledge of every bye-path and short cut, to
up before they had got half way,—Rosa-
r "Old Beau," as she called him, coming

am to ask Mrs. Rodney's leave, then, am
Huntworth, arriving at the wicket, where
to bid good night, and hailing Lord Fitz-
d Annie to tarry a minute, as Clermont had
p.

whose leave would you ask but hers?"
Rosalie, pensively, and, after a little struggle,
ng her hand to the old Beagler's hearty

e?" repeated Huntworth. "Well, then—
vn. That's fair, isn't it? Do you think
will of my own?"
you?"
I prove to you that I have?"
not? If you please. Are you sure you
gh?"

"May! Shall I prove it?"

"If you like. Please yourself."

"Please myself. Is that all that's wanted

"What can you want more?"

"Nothing—if I might—"

"Mayn't you?"

The words were on Huntworth's lips tha have sealed his fate as well as Mrs. Rodne he had lost the precious moment, for Lo herbert hurrying up—having left Annie so dred yards on to await them—"good night, a dreams to you," was all, with the parting pre that speaking grasp, he had time for; and, slowly homeward, as soon as a bend of the them from his sight,—"confound it!" ex he—"that's how it is the little torment alwa through my fingers—when it comes to th hang me! if I dare—" and, walking moodil got into the house unseen—took himself off i to bed—notwithstanding Mrs. Rodney's triu successes that day—out of humour with hims all the world, simply and solely because he the courage to say four words, his inability to plish which, was, perhaps, a matter quite as prehensible to Rosalie Bainbridge, as it was t worth Lowndes.

But where had Annie flown? or had 'The Lady' come and carried her away? Not

ont jumping out from the copse-side, just
left her—"come along, come along," said
havn't said the last word yet—cruel to
n—and see, how the dew's falling—you'll
d! and with only that little flimsy shawl on
ong!" and, nothing loath, Annie suffered
be drawn away, double-quick-pace, after
ty, who had now got with Walter Pember-
quarter of a mile a-head, leaving Cecil
ie to follow after at their leisure; though
n once it required all Clermont's sophistry,
asions, and mysterious hints about 'White
nd bad colds, and hot beds, and whey-pos-
Esther's terrible scoldings, to convince her,
not acting extremely rudely to his cousin,
d be very angry, she was sure! and to
er turning back, and making her peace,
nd, with him, with the best grace, under
nstances, she could.

ont Onslow as yet knew nothing of his
ousin's disposition. He measured him
y his own fair standard. No one could
ctually disguise his feelings, if so minded,
l Fitzherbert. Dissimulation of the deepest,
wer under a placid spotless front to veil the
workings of the human heart, was one of
features of his character, and, by reason of its
by far the most dangerous to have to deal

with. He never, like his father, forgot an ins
forgave an injury. Beneath the sweetest smil
lurk the fiercest hate and thirsting for r
And, like that capricious and implacable
whose blood, as poor Lady Fitzherbert rejo
think, ran so plentifully in her darling boy'
Cecil could bide his time—satisfied to await,
could encompass his victim, and accomplish h
without fear either of danger or defeat.

When Cecil Fitzherbert rejoined his cousin
surrendering his precious little charge to the
arms of sister Ann at 'The Grange,' and leavi
most favourable impressions on Miss Rosalie'
as to his polished conduct and elegant attenti
and Annie, after making a full confession
rudeness and its causes, had obtained the f
assurances of forgiveness, he looked so really
some and noble in her eyes, that we are no
sure Clermont would have been best pleased
known exactly the comparison it gave birth to
moment. Cecil saw his advantage, and Cec
herbert was not one to omit the opportun
improve it. Certain it is, he had never st
high in Annie's opinion as that night; and
Aunt Gerty, when she sat on the bed-foot
usual ten minutes' chat before wishing "good-
could not but acknowledge, that "he was
magnanimous fellow! she must own it—to

him of his chances, unchallenged, after
n."

mentally exclaimed Cecil, as, in the soli-
s chamber, he retraced and pondered over
cidents of the day—"I see. It is thus
n find favour, with such odds against me,
t. Patience—patience! Cecil Fitzherbert.
sweet Annie, we must be loving cousins
come the day—when cousin Cecil is the
and he will forgive thee—yes, forgive thee
sent little triumphs, cousin Clermont."

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY-BIRDS.

Conscious perhaps of having taken rat
unfair advantage of his cousin, by running off
ceremoniously with Annie the night befor
may be, of having, consequently, appeared a
disadvantages in Annie's eyes, Clermont, wi
sensitiveness that marked his character, arisin
no morbid impulses, but solely from a gener
pression of what was true, and fair, and jus
not resist going and knocking gently at Cecil
next morning as soon as he was up; first,
hope of making the *amende honorable* by a
tionate acknowledgment; and, secondly, to
in possession of an important thought that h
him awake half the night, and on which d
something equally interesting to them both.

Cecil was already up and nearly dresse
Clermont, usually the earliest riser at the Pa
sought admittance.

exclaimed Cecil, welcoming his cousin
rty shake of the hand,—"I thought I was
bird this morning, and should surprise
do what I will, sweet cousin Clermont
me have a chance. I shall win my wager,
on't you think, of Pemberton?"
that you won't to-day. He has been up
n hour. Hearing the glass-door opened, I
ut of bed, and there he was, with his port-
r his arm, off for an early 'Cuyp.'"
usion!" cried Cecil. "And Miss Annie?—
—culling the sweetest dew-buds, I'll be

uldn't wonder," smiled Clermont.
every way," bewailed Cecil.
are fortunate, though," congratulated Cler-
n having recovered so soon the use of your
e you right, though, in quite abandoning
yet?"
!" cried Cecil, throwing himself into a box-
de, and striking out right and left;—"could
Ben Caunt, by George! if he'd let me."
't Esther be in raptures?"
t know that, by Jove! Fancy, the 'clean
the thing that makes *her* happiest. Not a
at all, though, that whey-posset. Precious
old boy's punch, too, wasn't it?"
didn't say so," said Clermont, "but you

must have thought us very rude, running c
night in such a hurry."

"Oh—ah—eh—how, my dear fellow?" Cecil, proceeding with the arrangement of th of his neck-tie. "Ah!—last night—eh—wh old boy was squeezing hands. 'Gad! no- right—not a bit of it! Why the deuce d come to the scratch? Devilish nice little girl! sort, Miss Rosalie."

"Odd illustration—*devilish!* of a nice thought Clermont. "Supposed, though, high *ton*."

"Huntworth awful sweet there," laughed "Wouldn't she be Missus, by Jove! Cleve that of the ghost. How she clung to him!"

"You know how it was done, of course?" Clermont.

"Which—Charlie Ferrers'?"

"Yes, and the other, too. Both the sa got it all out of Mrs. Rodney."

"On stilts, wasn't it?"

"No, no—stilts?—no—how could Charlie have managed that? I'll tell you. And th half the reason I hung back a bit to pump about it; for I've a thought in my head as Charlie Ferrers'."

"The deuce you have!" cried Cecil, givi last touches to his hair and whiskers.

Yes, a thought in my head," proceeded Cler- "to keep the birds at Fernleigh safe and snug r Joes, mind you, as Charlie Ferrers kept them zelcombe for his—mark that!"

What, Jem changed his beat, has he?"

Yes, and won't leave *us*, confound him! a brace e soon, if we don't look out."

By Jove! you don't say so? There's Roxberry isn't there?"

Yes, there's Roxberry Gaol; and Jem knows it art. But that don't mend matters. When old in—young Jem's out. They take it by turns; ver could cage both of them together."

h! slippery dogs, eh? Deuce of a bore that!" Not a prettier manor of its size for dog and gun, y'd only let it alone, than Fernleigh," pursued ont. "Stands beautifully!—so snug and quiet en the Squire's and Higgs' farms—and lots of We bagged sixty-four brace and a half of dges—taking it easy—last September; and— ee—yes—eight brace of hares; and twenty-one asants, and a cock, the first ten days of October; orty-eight couple of rabbits. Not bad that, for e manor like Fernleigh, was it?"

By George!" cried Cecil—"bad? No, first-rate, ve! Beats me and Nugent Harvey hollow, stlemore; and there's a pretty sprinkling there, y were only looked after."

"That's just how it is at Fernleigh," rejoine
mont, warming, and now put quite at his ease
cousin's cordial manner—"there's no one t
after it—not as it should be. Old Ben's no
all but to puddle about the garden and stables
Higgs' wheat and barley crops arn't the ones
off, not they, for Jem and his son—however
Higgs may rail against them."

"There's Ralph Blithers, at Castlemore, g
thing to do hardly," remembered Cecil. "By G
he'd be the lad to a T."

"No use a bit," differed Clermont. "Jem
his thumbs at them all—only make it worse. C
Sessions, my dear fellow?—no more use, to d
with poaching, than Mrs. Lawton's whey-poss
Miss Annie's penny tracts."

"Hopeless case, seemingly," feared Cecil, s
ling the *mille fleur* over his pocket-handk
"Go halves, it appears, eh, with Jem? An
for a quiet life."

"Oh! if it were only halves," cried Clermo
shouldn't mind so much. But that's a barg
fancy, Master Jem and son are not likely to b
senting to so easily."

"What's to be done?" asked Cecil listlessl
throwing up the window.—"By George! going
a broiler again to-day. What say you to off
catching Pemberton in the fact, and getting

boy, for the milk-rolls;"—and, descending
o the lawn, the cousins—having taken a peep
l Sam received orders to have her ready for
canter over to 'The Cottage' after break-
lled off, chatting on about Fernleigh, in the
of the 'Cuyp;' hoping to drop on the author-
tch him in the fact,' as Cecil called it, and
et fresh morning bud or two from his ever-
bouquet of nature's choicest gathering.
bad idea at all," resumed Cecil, beginning
nore interested as Clermont disclosed the
ne had in his head for dealing with Jem at
somewhat after Charlie Ferrers' fashion at
be; "that is, if Jem's not up to it, re-

ne. No fear of that. They say, he as firm-
it was the ghost of Martha Rudge—who
ered in the heath-field wood close by about
ns before—that came on them that night,
's Jem Shipton."
ou really think he can be such a fool?"
il.

Bring the strong arm of the flesh
Master Jem, and he'll snap his fingers, and
two can play at that game as well as one.
m he minds no more than those ash twigs.
ould no more pass through a churchyard,
ng coward! after nightfall, if he could help

it, or the heath-field copse, I'll wager anythin
pitch his nets and springes into the fire, and
honest ways to gain a living."

"If that be so," said Cecil; "of course, all
on that."

"Well, you saw how 'The White Lady'
ened Rosalie last night by the fir-walk? An
with the *mens conscia recti*, too. You cann
ceive—I know them better than you do—ha
more a great deal among them, and studied th
than half the keepers have—at all seasons
hours—ate, drank, and slept among the
understand them better;—I say, you cannot
—fight like demons as they will to the dea
their mortal foes—what rank, arrant cowar
are, nineteen out of twenty of them, play upo
superstitious fears—the only fears they seem
Get them on that hook, and, faith! you've
them fairly on the hip. Keepers, justices,
sessions, goals, my dear fellow—all moonshin
spit at and defy them! A good deal, thoug
believe, might be done on the principle of *pre*
rather than of punishment—by trying what
character would effect. Sending the poa
prison will never get him one, if that's wh
send him for. What is a man—however pen
may feel and inclined to do better—to hope fo
life, Heaven help him! without a character?

eceive, or employ, or believe him—even when he
s the truth? I tell you—for I know it—it is
npossibility, as he thinks, of ever being restored
social position as an honest man, that keeps him,
ndreds of cases, the outcast that he is. Would you
on his fears, you must be something more
mortal—you must be of another, fleshless mould
ghost—a 'White Lady'—the wandering spirit of
murdered Martha; and then, and then only, will
ave a chance to bring Master Jem to reason and
ction."

But, recollect," reminded Cecil, "the Cossack
e took at Charlie, as he flew."

Which, going through the neck of her ghostship
ut damage or derangement, was the best friend
eed, no doubt, Charlie Ferrers ever had, and
est surety by far we can also have, that Jem
fectly satisfied it is no sort of use—pitch into
pommel Master Rokeby how he will—to be
g his poacher's pluck on ghosts and goblins."

But you have not explained clearly yet," said
, "how it was that her ghostship's neck, and
lie's proper own, on that occasion, bore so inde-
nt a relationship to each other."

Nothing can be simpler," replied Clermont.
en disposed to have another game at ghosts
Jem, you have only, first, to provide yourself
an old hair carpet-broom, with good broad

shoulders; drive the handle through it long enc
form the neck and fix the head upon—"

"How the head?"

"O, that is easy enough. With a little st
hay, covered with calico, and masked, you can
one in five minutes to your fancy; and, if
eye for the sepulchral, almost frighten yours
into fits while you are doing it. Then,
formed and fixed your head, and got some
womenkind to run you up a long white sh
sufficiently long, mind, when thrown over the
head, held up above your own by its handle as
it will go, to reach down to your toes, and
the stick a little from the throat downwards, t
of the drapery flowing gracefully over you
taking care, of course, that you are complet
veloped in its folds,—hoist the mask aloft, and
just the early moon, no spectre of the Har
walked the earth more spectre-like and terrible.

"The effect, by Jove, is striking!" agreed
"Though it was a trick of the old boy's to t
by surprise, and try it on Miss Rosalie. M
crept, that it certainly did, when the figure
through the firs."

"Much depends, of course," continued Cle
"on the getting up of the broom—that the
artistically done, fixed tight, the mask a goo
and the shroud fastened securely across the h

: to leave the features alone visible, and not too
mind, to be held up perfectly straight without
e; and on the walk, of course, and bearing
in correct keeping—as ghost-like and unter-
l as possible. Well, now, I'll tell you—we'll
a try at it some night for rehearsal; and then,
I'm perfect, you shall see! Please the fates, I'll
a turn with Master Jem, shall astonish his
mind."

ou?—you are joking!" exclaimed Cecil, stopping

ever was more in earnest in my life," replied
ont.

uppose Jem should be up to it? Do you think
ntworth Lowndes has told the secret to any of
ople, it hasn't reached Jem's ears in ten years?
nse!"

Not a soul knows, I'll warrant, anything about it
outs but Mrs. Rodney, and Lowndes' old
t, Joe Munns. Leave old Joe alone for keep-
secret. Get a word out of Joe if you can, that
n't mean to tell you. No, no—safe enough
"

hat's all very fine; but Mrs. Rodney," re-
, "told *you*; and, if she would tell one, she
another."

Because," explained Clermont, steadfast to his
"she knew very well, if she did not—Hunt-
would, if I asked him; and—"

"Because you promised her faithfully," I Cecil, "that it should never go further; a see—a pretty confidant you are—you have before four and twenty hours."

"I promised nothing," denied Clermont; " safe, of course, just as well with you as with

"And you really mean," resumed Cecil, minute's silence, during which he seemed seriously revolving Clermont's scheme in his "you really mean to say, do you, you will play White Lady' again, yourself, for Jem's benefit

"That will I," exclaimed Clermont, "as I'm living! if I can only get a couple of staunch hearts, to look on, as Charlie said, fair play."

"Not much difficulty, as far as that goes, I think," rejoined Cecil. "Get a good other— George! I don't mind lending a hand myself my wind in."

"You?—no, no—never!" cried Clermont. would spoil it all."

"Spoil it? Why so?"

"Do you suppose," answered Clermont, " preserve the necessary *quantum suf* of gh gravity and decorum, with you looking on back ground, ready to burst out laughing. down? yes, of course I should, to a certaint then, a pretty mess I should get into, for my Jem!"

that's it," said Cecil; "if, by Jove! you *will* ding the lion in his den—at all events, we ke precaution—so to have the muzzle ready for te—that, if it came to the struggle, by George! he might show his great sharp teeth, he 't bite much."

ngle handed, with equal weapons, a clear coast, play," said Clermont, "he might come on the muzzle—I wouldn't flinch him."

at I can quite believe," accorded Cecil. "I 't like myself, and that's true, a blow, in if I could help it, from that brawny right A good cause, too, gives one such jolly don't it?"

does, indeed! Without it, though armed to h, and crafty as a red Indian, you're afraid of vn shadow almost."

! *ecce homo!*" cried Cecil, arrived at the hill- d pointing to the nook half way down the pposite, where, sitting with his portfolio on his Walter Pemberton was laying the foundation h deathless laurels;—"our right well beloved sty author-artist, as I'm living."

! good morning to you," returned Pemberton, out a hand—"if it's not too late. At it ever —downright incorrigible!"

ish I had your talent," said Clermont, looking s shoulder, as he finished the sketching in the

outline of old 'Socrates,' grazing in the pa
the hill foot.

"Why do you wish it?" asked Pemberto
on rapidly with his drawing.

"Because," answered Clermont, "it appe
an Art fraught with such cherished pride, a
and lasting pleasures to those who have it."

"It has its delights, unquestionably," r
Pemberton; "but they are not so unalloyed,
it, believe me, as you, a mere amateur-ad
them, may imagine."

"What matters the little alloy, insepara
all that is good and valuable," exclaimed C
"with such intrinsic worth to outweigh it fif

"You speak as you feel, I see," said Pe
"rather from a conviction of what ought to
what is. 'Tis a sweet dream! Do you su
authors and artists have not heads and h
same as other men? 'Faith! there is little
in their structures. And what there is, is
subject more of sorrow than of boast. Th
tenements we live in, though differently
and fitted up, are fashioned pretty much
unvarying model. Pray, wish not to take p
us. Do you think," continued Walter, pu
his pencils and portfolio, and casting wistful
towards the Parsonage hot-buttered-rolls a
—"do you think we have no ambition—

ears, no distrusts, no discouragements, no emu-
ns, no jealousies, no too sanguine dreams, no dis-
intments, no envies, no malice, no injustice, no
ies, no keen hungers and thirsts to cope withal
embitter the sweet cup? Oh! if you knew
head-throbbings, and heart-achings, and spirit-
ings that every London public picture-gallery
its on its walls—every bookseller's shop has
ss melancholy witnesses of on their teeming
es,—you would think twice, believe me, before
cared to be an artist, or an author."

And yet," said Cecil, "ache as head and heart
—what would you take, to be exempt from
er cause of suffering?"

Certainly, were there no pains, there would be
easures," admitted Pemberton. "They are as
evenly balanced, I suppose, as our short-comings
e us reasonably to look for. Those suffer least
look for somewhat under, though, than over
they get, I fancy."

You poets must be perpetual martyrs, then," said

There is a spirit in the *true faith*, no doubt,
table—unquenchable!" supposed Clermont.

And, when we have had breakfast," smiled
erton, "let it burn away as fierce as it likes.
ake my advice—who was a poet born, they tell
rather have a mill-stone tied round your neck,

and be thrown into Marksbury mill tail, might be preferable, and equally serve soc hedger and ditcher, than start in life witl but the poetical to depend on. The soul station is a poor soul indeed! Lucky fe Pemberton, that his grand-mother was not a painter; and enabled him, good old soul! last will and testament, to snap his thum baker and his laundress; or heaven knows is harrowing to think of it—heaven on superhuman genius as he is—instead, this morning, of sitting down, as, thank the fa now going to do, like a gentleman, to his ho rolls and coffee,—whether he mightn't hav in the midst of plenty, a crust, my dear fe a clean shirt."

"See the fruits of early rising!" exclai Gerty, coming out with Annie on the law them, and exchange morning salutations. have we been flattering ourselves that we all the rosiest buds in Marksbury—and loo blooming bouquets, my patience! you hav with you in every cheek."

"You bad, wicked boy!" cried Esther holding up an admonitory finger of one h she warmly pressed Cecil's offered palm with "left off the sling—you have, have you? We are going to write to your mother

u understand, and, as sure as you're born, she
ow the trouble I have with you."
in Cecil pleaded, and Clermont came to the
No—Esther was inexorable. "He should
s breakfast, though, all the same—as Mr.
ton was there; but his mother should know
s sure as he was living! And if the Vicar
duty, he would put him down to a task that
keep him out of mischief for one while; and,
adn't finished it by dinner, he might cry his
t before she'd let him taste a bit of any-

take him in hand, leave me alone for that,"
d the Vicar; which seeming so far sufficient
ie and Aunt Gerty, and, "though a deal more
e deserved," to Walter Pemberton, the very
ing that could be done with him—the storm
er, and, presently, not a cloud was to be seen
re in the perfect little heaven of peace and
y that canopied the Parsonage.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLEDGE.

BREAKFAST finished, and most unmistake
dence afforded, if high spirits and keen appe
be taken as a proof, of the salutary effects
rising, Clermont, munificently provided, set
Annie in the pony-chair for Bonnington; L
herbert intending, he thought, to ride over
berry to make some purchases, and take "
tage" on his way home, and dine, probably,
the evening with his aunt; while Walter P
devoted the morning to "immortalizing W
old Nep, and Aunt Gerty, too, if she wou
him with a sitting, and not object to be t
point next May, at Somerset House, which,
would be inevitable."

Seeing no insuperable objection to this, "
Mr. Walter Pemberton was quite confide
interest, as well as talent enough, to get
Waddle hung well *in sight*;" after making th

to her *toilette*, and, at last, succeeding in
ep to some extent sensible of the necessity,
ned to go down to posterity the beauty he
nfining himself to the posture, and no other,
n minutes, in which he was placed, and not
dly, when he was told to face the company,
ning his back on it in that most ill-bred
-down sat Aunt Gerty, first having obtained
tunately for Somerset House!—"to talk as
he pleased, always with her eyes, and with
e, too, till they came to the mouth; and
should be put out of her misery in five
f she would just keep her lips quiet for two
—not pouting, nor pursed up, but in their
ral, unstudied state, if possible—of all others
charming—at least, so considered Walter
—the most speaking, most eloquent, most
state in which they could be taken, to his

alf a thought more to the left," said Pem-
mmencing operations in good earnest, after
ched in the outline of old Nep inimitably,
could get it;—"the least more—that's it
an't be better. Now, look me full in the
—let me lower the blind a bit. There,
the thing. Now, look at me again. The
lder a wee bit forwarder.—Good! that will
lly! It is so enhancing—don't you think

so—to the portrait we love, to have the ey
sweet communings with us whichever way

"Talking of eyes," smiled Aunt Gerty,
quite a battle about them yesterday at H
while Huntworth Lowndes was shewing
beagles."

"Ah! the battle of the eyes?" cried P
"Dangerous weapons at Marksbury, 'fait
throwing at each other."

"Nothing would do for Rosalie," contin
Gerty, "but black—black as night—with
well out—curtained with long silken la
burning with unutterable fire. Annie thou
truth and steadfastness—dark grey, though
the fire of the sable, were much to be admi
what mattered colour? It was the dispositi
that imparted to the expression its chi
Were not the same vices, as well as virt
under every shade of skin alike?" Cler
sidered that, "as women were all such
creatures! their eyes of course ought to be
and their hair of angel-hue."

"What hue is that?" asked Pemberton.

"As he seems to worship but one divin
shape of womankind," smiled Aunt Gerty, "
it must be Annie Lawton's."

"Ah! and Lord Fitzherbert,—what th
Miss Rosalie ranked high, no question?"

ranked high. We all had our merits.
nk there was an inch left, for jealousy to
between the blacks and browns. The
much to recommend them! especially as
is—one pair of them—had just exhibited
t taste touching the ceruleans—the most
f of the true heavenly tint—the most
eautiful of all!—for their very scarcity to
e highest."
cousins think alike there?" said Pem-

y, it seems, on that score."
nt appears to be an open-hearted, unsus-
erous-natured fellow."
oul of truth, and integrity, and kind
."
iss Annie admires grey eyes, does she?"
ply and devotedly, I do believe, as Cler-
es blue."
do not wonder at it. Miss Lawton is a
ure!"
really — with artist's eye — think her
asked Aunt Gerty.
r saw female form, of that cast and com-
faultless," answered Pemberton.
t so to Clermont. I can see he drinks
with eyes and ears already, every word
om your lips."

"I think we should soon be inseparab
In much we think alike. He has a tone
refreshing to commune with, after the d
double-dealing one meets with at every
simplicity of tastes, and sincerity of pur
should make him simply happy, if happin
strange life were always the lot of those
deserve it."

"If it were!—true—then I would say, pe
to him in colours bright and beautiful as y
you could scarcely exceed the truth. But,
he already revels in visions of his own arde
ing, bright and beautiful enough—too br
beautiful, perhaps."

"Do you think so?" replied Pemberton

"I need not ask if he greatly adm
Annie," continued Pemberton, after a
pause; "I can see he does."

"Loves her as fondly, as faithfully, as
as man can woman! But I am not sure t
done more than breathe it to his own h
even as much as that—in language at a
and intelligible to himself."

"And Miss Annie?" asked Pemberton.

"Will never know the void in hers, till th
she now thinks locked up in it so safely al
is gone."

"Gone? Why should it go—why not c
hold it fast?"

Why not indeed!"

would not go of its own accord, would it?"

o, no—no fear of that. There's the trouble. it would remain for ever, left to its own will."

Who would have the heart to rob it of it?

hose perhaps," replied Aunt Gerty, lowering ice, "who should protect her in the possession ost."

ndeed!"

nd out of love, too—love, mind—to replace it nother far more costly—out of love, too, that, you!"

oor heart!" exclaimed Pemberton; "happiest it can lay up its own treasure for itself."

as my brother said anything to you about more?" asked Aunt Gerty.

few words only, as we strolled round the ery after dinner yesterday. A good living I se."

bout double that of Marksbury. But not a nt feature in it beyond."

as been the cradle of more than one Bishop, car, I think, was saying?"

seems not unlikely to be the grave of all our ess here," replied Aunt Gerty, sinking her almost to a whisper. "I heartily wish, *entre* we had never heard its name."

ut, if Clermont should make up his mind for

the Church, which he tells me his mothe
him above all things to do—what could y
for him better?"

"Nothing. But he never will. He mig
done so once. I wish, now, that he had.
you think he told me one day?—"that the
Annie ever looked at him with kind eyes,
evening when they were all at a merry-m
'The Cottage,' and he put on his father's ur

"Ah! I see. In the event of his cousin
he will succeed to the title and estates?"

"Yes—if Lord Fitzherbert should not m
leave a male heir."

"Yes, yes, I see. Remain in that positio
please—just two moments—just as you're
now—you may wink presently;—capital—
do;—now you may talk again as much as
Lord Fitzherbert seems to be quite at home
rural life at Marksbury."

"As happy, don't he, as if he'd been a
as Sam calls us, all his days."

"And no wonder. It must be a heaven
for the *blasé* spirit, surfeited and sickened w
don dissipation, to drop suddenly down int
little elysium of purity and peace as this."

"I expect, if our purity and peace were al
to offer," smiled Aunt Gerty, "it would be
to maintain the charm of *their* novelty v
beyond the usual period."

fancy," said Pemberton, "the Marksbury will not very easily be exhausted, as far as I serve."

n! you think so? And so do I," rejoined Gerty. "Tell me now—and tell me candidly—ve a keen and penetrating eye, and take in t a glance,—tell me, admires Cecil Fitzherbert Lawton?"

speak, I believe," replied Pemberton, looking o Aunt Gerty's eyes, "to a very good friend rmont's—none better, I should imagine?"

ne."

en, as you ask me, I believe that Lord Fitz- *does;* as who would not?"

s, yes," agreed Aunt Gerty, "*I* admire her admire her—every one admires her; but I do ean, as you admire, and as I admire. You what I mean—is Lord Fitzherbert's admiration the Lady Emma Sommersley might not best e of, if she knew it?"

! the Lady Emma the Vicar was talking to ut yesterday? Really, that's more than I can All depends."

what?"

the sort of love she feels, I suppose, for nd the latitude she allows. Is she very fond?"

ell, to be candid, from what I've heard—if it me off, 'twill be a love-match, rather between

the parents and properties, I fancy, than
dren."

"In that case, as far as jealous heart-brea
there may be no cause, may there, for serious

"But you think that Lord Fitzherbert r
admire Annie?" repeated Aunt Gerty.

"Far more, I imagine," replied Pemberto
the heart that has most right to be anxiou
suspicion of; or the heart that most desires
it should be so, has, as yet, ventured to be
sible."

"That is your impression?"

"It is. And yours, too, I think."

"Well, the same thought *has* crossed
than once," admitted Aunt Gerty, after a m
two's thought, during which Pemberton
calmly with the portraits;—"especially la
when we left you talking politics with Rosal
Fitzherbert, when addressing Annie, was
animated and agreeable."

"I may be mistaken," said Pemberton
seems to me, Lord Fitzherbert's is a natur
much studying to comprehend the depths
must have an eye can see a good way b
surface, to lay it bare, I fancy. There are
worth in that heart still, though sadly
sprouting out when a genial sun-ray reac
and bearing a stray flower. But it is sho

as soon as come—fading under the first dark
l or cutting wind. It has no root—no fixed
iple—no certain sustenance—no permanence.
er bright skies and gales propitious, it may bear
ay blossom, but there is no fruit, or none worth
g so. A pity!—for he has graces of mind, as
as of person, of no common order; but, wanting
ood heart to animate and actuate which, he had
r be ugly and ignorant as a Hottentot."

A rather dangerous rival, nevertheless, you con-
?"

Well, certainly, were I Clermont Onslow, and
ous to make Annie Lawton's heart all my own,"
d Pemberton, "I should be quick about it, I
, with such a gifted cousin for a rival as Cecil
erbert."

You think my brother *is* ambitious, then?"
l Aunt Gerty, with a slight tone of sadness in
voice. "Nay, you do but judge him justly.
e is the '*damning spot*' somewhere, I suppose,
ll of us—the characteristic black-blotch that
s the plague within—the poisoned drop that
tters the sweetest cup? Yes, yes—that is *his*
ue spot—my beloved brother's *ambition*. Tell
-what led you to suppose that Lord Fitzherbert's
ration of Annie would be so pleasing to her
r?"

I might ask you, why you believe I so think?"

replied Pemberton. "I can hardly tell you
fancy perhaps. I had no right, that I kn
form any opinion at all. One is apt to ima
things, where such beauty, and worth, and
estates are in the case."

"Nay, you must have some better reason
You do not speak, I am sure, without go
Has my brother said anything to induce
judge?"

"Nothing more than—when we were ch
gether about Lady Emma yesterday—'that
herbert's taste, like his father's, was for *bl*
thought.'"

"Strange!" exclaimed Aunt Gerty. "
great oddities. You have heard of Bella G

"Only a word or two. A *brunette* of gre
too, and accomplishments—Lady Edith Fit
orphan ward, and *protégée*?"

"Yes; and, by all accounts, *perfection*
Fitzherbert's eyes; or, was, till he came to M
And now see, the *blonde* is all in all—isn't
the men?"

"Only what I should have expected," sm
berton. "Quite natural, and accountable, I
—in strict keeping."

"How—to worship black one day, and
next? You surprise me."

"Oh! I have nothing to do with i

me. I only represent human nature as I find

oor thing!—is she as false, then—as fickle as
sighed Aunt Gerty. "I don't believe it!"
ou say it is so," reminded Pemberton.
Vhat is such worship worth?"
iat is another matter. I only said it was quite
—quite accountable."
ow so?"
eed I tell you," replied Pemberton, "how many
ps there are for their idols? The worship of
s—the worship of the lips—the worship of the
—the worship of the knees—the worship of the
the worship of the heart—the worship of the
—and the worship of the passions?"
nd, pray, with what sort of worship are we di-
of Marksbury worshipped, may it please
asked Aunt Gerty.
e beauteous *blondes*, you mean, I presume?"
Pemberton. "For your satisfaction, then—in
se before us,—I am inclined to believe, with
rship of reason, rather than of passion."
ndeed! you puzzle me. With the worship of
? Which supposes, of course, that our wor-
r is, at all events, to a certain extent, master of
culty."
o far, undoubtedly, as to be sensible of the
ge which such sacrifice to the shrine of his new

divinity does to himself—to his own se
The heart is, indeed, a compound of strang
rieties. We seldom most love in another
prominent complexion and characteristics th
guish ourselves. For casual companionship,
will attach itself willingly enough to birds o
feather, and seem to wish no better; but, in
of a companion for life—of wife, or husbar
the blackest will often turn with a shud
its own colour, and the whitest think it
to admire in a striking contrast. The bru
most beauty in the soft blue eyes; and the
in the gipsy-visaged maid. Till he came t
bury—don't you see?—Lord Fitzherbert
one pair of fond eyes that smiled tenderly
on him—that is so, is it not?—and they w
own colour and constitution almost to a sh
prized them, as who would not, the bri
devoted eyes that saw beauty only in himse
they were too much like his own—refl
universally the one object most familiar t
He would be regarded through a medium t
ferent from his own; he would find favour i
antipodes of self; he was weary of the sam
which reflected only the selfishness of self
was surfeited—reason asked just for onc
turn."

"Reason, call it you? Well, never min

hink, we can really offer that 'little turn' at sbury?"

ord Fitzherbert seems to think so, most un-onably."

oor Clermont! I am afraid his simple tastes ncourtlike manners would stand but a sorry e beside his Lordly cousin's, with a heart one less gentle and guileless than Annie Lawton's."

h! and Miss Annie," recalled Pemberton, "loves rk greys, too, so much! you say?"

es," returned Aunt Gerty, thoughtfully. "But loves her father, too—fondly, dutifully, de-ly! Were it to be the final choice left her—, go you must with father, or with Clermont—rt for ever, Annie, with the one, or with the ; and the last look seemed to upbraid her with ld's duty unfulfilled,—my belief is, solemnly! gh it broke her heart to do it, Annie would, theless, cling to the old roof-tree."

see, I see," said Pemberton. "Love and duty. a hard struggle! with a heart like Annie's, when nes to that."

God forbid!" exclaimed Aunt Gerty, "it should come to it, with Annie—for her father's sake, s than for her own. Will you do one thing for You *can* do it."

Yes, then, anything."

Have some talk with Clermont, the first chance,

about the profession he should follow. Yo
the wish he had once about the army? It
time he fixed on something."

"To what end?"

"To rout him out of the dream that de
his nobler faculties, hanging about Marksb
rather, about Annie Lawton, as he is now d
induce him, if he will not embrace the churc
to the bar, or be a physician, or anything, ra
lead the idle, hang-about, inglorious life he
leading, writhing on the hooks of a hopeless lo
yes, hopeless, irremediably hopeless, as yet,
brother; because he knows not, poor fell
strength that is in him; which, if put out,
more, I'll warrant, for his hopes, than all th
mores and Coronets in Christendom."

"He possesses the sort of stuff, I do think,
Pemberton, "would turn to rich account, if
wisely."

"As it is, don't you see," continued Au
more cheerfully, "his hopes, poor boy! of A
always call him boy, though he will be two-an
next October—I used to help make his plu
for Winchester,—his hopes of Annie, which h
the tune of and for little else,—though, e
myself, he has not breathed them even to a
soul—are hopes only, of no more sense, or s
in the calculating eyes of my ambitious broth

l yours be, if that way tending, by the side of Lordly heir to Castlemore; no, not even yours, gh with all the treasures of that poet's great heart, that teeming portfolio, too, into the bargain, to your silly suit."

I suppose not," accorded Pemberton. "Depend I will do my best. But, remember, on whatever ssion Clermont decides, the steady pursuit of ust, of course, remove him from among you. ing his cousin, I fancy, would thank us more han thus, clearing the coast for him; just what l please him most, I take it."

That I see," admitted Aunt Gerty. "But not, agine, in the end serve him best. Clermont's nt all but forlorn hope, with his mother's Cottage, wo hundred a year Squiredom in prospect, though l points with himself, would help his Lordly far more I conceive, in my brother's lofty estima- than his absence would endanger him—earning eedful titles to demand her of him."

And Miss Annie, you think—"

Will never, I tell you, appreciate the value of her ure, till she has parted with it for a while, and ears the honest worth at which it is accounted by s, as well as by her own dear little doating self."

he entrance of Esther Lawton, to take a peep, broke off the conversation; and, rising from his Walter Pemberton, shading his brow with his

left arm, made a critical survey of his work thro
closed-fist of the other.

"Admirable!" exclaimed Esther. "My de
very self! And my cameo-brooch, too, I decl
T.—well, that is beautiful!"

"Might Aunt Gerty have a peep—just o
peep, too—only one?"

"Not for worlds! Not till to-morrow—
mouth was finished."

"How tantalizing—how exceedingly unkin
inconsiderate—how unfeeling!"

But Esther's delighted looks and upraised
standing vouchers for the successful hit, so fa
Aunt Gerty was obliged to resign herself, as
might, heroically to her fate; satisfied with
Pemberton's reiterated assurances, amounting
to a certainty—that nothing but the necessary
failing with the hanging committee—which
thing not to be thought of for a moment wi
influence, through the Marquis of Somebod
that was *entre eux*—as his brother had got,
possibly prevent her being hung, not only *i*
but also ranking one among the choicest *chef-d*
of the select few."

Meanwhile, light hearted as sunny ski
sunnier thoughts could make them, proceede
mont and Annie on their mission of true char
benevolence.

ever perhaps had Clermont's heart, seldom over-
owed even by passing cloud, bounded with joy
e radiant and rapturous, than when, fairly off
Annie by his side, he regarded her as his, his
absolutely, and exclusively all his own! that
y morning. Devotedly as he had always wor-
ped almost the atmosphere she breathed and the
earth she trod, never had she seemed to him
eautiful, so divinely pure, so precious, so priceless!
nce the arrival of other appreciating eyes eager to
omage at her shrine no less devotedly than him-
For, though his cousin's admiration had gone
urther than such beauty and amiability as Annie's
anded from good breeding, he was not so unob-
ant but that he could see the evident pleasure her
ty gave him, and the pains he took to make his
as agreeable to her also as he could. It is
sing to observe, how our appreciations, even when
think we appreciate the most, are raised to
ation point, by hearing the objects of our admira-
the theme of praise and delight with other eyes
lips besides our own. A little rivalry wonder-
whets our regards. New beauties arise we
r saw before, or, if we saw, there was no parti-
r necessity for us to be in any hurry to do special
nage to. It is when our jewel glitters brightest
he eyes of others, that we prize it most ourselves.
ile unacknowledged but by our own judgment, it

is robbed of half its lustre. We see it in pe
best, when it dazzles others most. Then we h
selves in the possession of it, and, congra
ourselves on our good fortune, cannot take
care of what, while it glittered to gladden
eyes alone, glittered comparatively unheeded
vain. Before Cecil's arrival at the Parson
Clermont been asked, what gem on earth
desired to call his own, probably he wou
answered, without a moment's hesitation,
Lawton's little heart; but the answer wou
been given in that calm tone of self-confidenc
the supposed certainty of self-trust inspired.
seeing it attracting the admiration of other d
hearts but his own; its possession, too, cove
disputed for by richer bidders than himself;
he could scarcely prize it more than he ha
now that there was the faintest shadow of
bility of his losing it,—O, how transcendantly
and beautiful, beyond all he had ever befo
ceived, did it appear to him!—how preciou
matchless—how inestimable—how indispensa

It will, therefore, hardly be too much to s
the anticipated joy of his ride that day with
all alone, to Bonnington and back; accompani
was by the pleasing nature of the mutually g
mission they were bent upon, was to Cle
heart the summit of true happiness, which h

exchanged, as Aunty Gerty expressed it, the Castlemores and Coronets in Christen- d wisely had Clermont determined to make of it. But, though it was an opportunity t never occur again, and there was a fond e at his side, to give willing ear, and o every word that fell from his lips, yet hopes and wishes struggling for utterance ips find no voice, although fluent enough ltitude of indifferent little matters that e well been postponed, one would have or some less devoted occasion; and it was ey reached Bonnington, that the thought oss him—" how half his chance was gone, one word of the pressing business with heart was chiefly charged had yet been ."

ere was yet time, and plenty, if used to There was the stroll through the fair, had disposed of their commissions; and, sweet ride home. So, having enlisted the ices of a loving friend of Esther Lawton's, esent charge of, and see placed in the hands or burnt outs, the good things contributed use, in such manner that no clue should ossible, as to the source from which they or Dick Grogram, possessing, among other es, one of those independent souls, with all

its necessities, that could never brook the tho
obligation,—and, furthermore, Clermont ha
addition to the public purse and packages p
slipped a sealed envelope into Dinah Bartlett
aside, specially and privately intended for
personal use and benefit, touching the con
which Clermont had no mind that any one
know anything of but himself, and hardly th
they hied them to the fair, to buy Tom a
their new colours; and lay in the necessary
gingerbread nuts and penny whistles for th
polls; and a fine new plush waistcoat with
o'pearl buttons for Humphrey; and a pretty ca
a-piece for Hannah, and Mrs. Hopkins; and
bran-new silver thimble for Mrs. Rodney; an
other little things, for one and the other,
impossible to enumerate; till, four o'clock
and the fat lady, and the learned pig, and the
giant, and the wax-work, and tar polls, and
sacks, &c., &c., having yet to be done—it
to make haste, and be thinking of returning
yet, still, not one word spoken of the all vital
another hour's loss of the courage to e
which might rob him of an opportunity nev
his again—an opportunity which he had lon
above all earthly joys, the anticipation of wh
kept him without a wink of sleep almost
nights, and the forfeiture of which, to his e

ty, and timidity, would, he knew, send him to a
ess pillow for many a night to come. There
he ride home yet left. Tom and Jerry could do
an hour. There was no necessity to hurry.
ould out with it, if he died for it! and on rattled
and Jerry as fast as legs could carry them;
us, we suppose, to get home as quick as possible
ew Aunt Gerty their new colours.

—on—on, rattled Clermont, although there
no hurry. What could have possessed him?
ould have given worlds for another hour, to
to know—to feel that Annie was by his side—
s own—absolutely—exclusively his own that
day! yet—on—on he hastened, as if no less in
ry than Tom and Jerry to restore Miss Annie
e arms of Aunt Gerty, and to show her the
airings. On—on—on—and still talked Annie
of poor Grogram—and of his joy, and how
it would be! when he got his unexpected
ures; and of his wonder, how great that would
o! to conceive where it all could come from;
of Dinah Bartlett, how hospitable, and kind,
considerate she was, how sure she felt that she
d faithfully attend to and carry out all their
s! and of the Cornish giant; and the fat lady;
the learned pig; and of the bright new pair of
rs, and how gaily they fluttered in the wind as Tom
Jerry tossed their saucy heads, and how proud

that Jerry seemed of them! and what a delici
it had been—and how happy she felt!—and
had enjoyed her drive!—and when they shou
such another?—while Clermont, spell-bound
only listen enraptured to the sweet flowing ac
affection and encouragement as they fell fr
lips; or, if he essayed a reply, so incoherent
remarks, as the spire of the old church came
in the distance into fuller view, that he blu
the thought crossed him—how exceedingly fo
was making himself, which effectually tied
tongue still tighter—so painful, at last, became
barrassment, that Annie, herself at fault, rela
a few moments into musing; till, coming to
of the steep hill that had to be mastered be
sylvan glories of Marksbury, lying peacefully
hollow, burst upon them, and which was to
an affair for even Tom and Jerry's ardour to
light of as they made believe,—the spell was s
broken. The summit reached, and there was
to all Clermont's blissful dreams for that d
when would such another fall ever to his lot
again? There was just the limited time and
and no more, between where Tom and Jerry,
their necks to the collar, seemed resolved to
further time for indecision, and the hill-top, i
to put the seal-warrant to his fate for weal
—when—O, the wonders that are often

he ground sinking under us and at the last —letting the reins fall loosely from his grasp:— omething tells me," said Clermont, sadly, "that s the last time, Annie, we shall ever have a ride together for many a long day."

Vhy so?" asked Annie, a slight shade of n paleness overcasting her beautiful features.

hardly know," replied Clermont, tremulously; such is my belief."

cannot see why you should think so," re- l Annie, tenderly.

Ay mother is anxious that I should determine e life I mean to follow," explained Clermont. r father is no less so,—and—and—my own con- ns tell me they are right."

And if so," said Annie; "if you must leave us time,—it is only for a time—a short separation render the re-union all the happier for us all."

Ah! could I think—could I but be sure of that!" imed Clermont, fervently, "O, what would I uffer—what would I not do—what would I not take—what would I not achieve?"

You cannot doubt it—you ought not—you do I am sure," said Annie, her eyes filling with

You will not be left wholly without a cavalier, s a comfort, when I am gone," proceeded Cler- , seeing Annie had taken his words to heart

a little, and trying to assume a more cheerful
"to escort, and drive you where you wish."

"A comfort!" repeated Annie. "To wh

"To you," replied Clermont.

"Thank you, Clermont."

"What better substitute could you desire

"None—if I wanted one."

"You do not want one, then?" cried C
blushing deeply. "I may go—and you wi
place the old image with a new one? O,
again—say but that I may hope—that I ma
—that I may live for that dear promise?"

"Promise?" said Annie, her throat full. "
Do you require it? Do I ask you for one?-

"Because!" exclaimed Clermont, seizing t
relinquished to his grasp, and pressing it bet
own with an emotion kept him speechles
minute;—"because—because I gave way to
mentary fit of mad jealousy I blush to think

"Well you may—I am ashamed of yo
Annie.

"O Annie!" cried Clermont, still keeping
sion of her hand—"some day you will kno
the heart that is yours—yes—need I say so?
—yours—wholly, solely, devotedly yours!—th
you with a love as fond and unselfish as ma
ever felt for woman. You tell me, *you* ask
mise. Nor do I.—No, no!—God is my witn

I love you—how true and constant I will be
u—you know I will! Smile on me with those
eyes—I want no other pledge. How ungrate-
how senseless of me! Yes—you smile—I
you would. Say—tell me—O, speak but that
ear word—yes, yes—that one word—that will be
uardian angel—my guiding-star—my hope—my
ance—my solace—my encouragement under every
and difficulty, and disappointment—say—say—"
What—what, Clermont, would you more?"
Say—say—but—that you love me! Yes—you
you do—I read it in your eyes—O happiness!"
d, snatching her to his heart—though Clermont
d no other pledge than what those tell-tale eyes
led,—the contract, seemingly, was not deemed
lete till Annie had permitted him to seal and
it in a manner, may be, wholly inexcusable
er part, if she could have helped it; but in a
ner, nevertheless, to our thinking—as nothing
ever persuade us but that she must have been,
ro conscientiæ, a consenting party—constituting
cto, if not *de jure*, as valid a deed at all points
acting lover could require.

or was Clermont a minute too soon; for scarcely
Annie time to recover from her surprise, and
him for his rudeness as he merited, when the
le of the old church rose into full view, and, off
ng Tom and Jerry again—in less than ten

minutes were fluttering the new streamers up
street of Marksbury. But, gay and gallant
Gerty and Walter Pemberton admitted the
much we doubt whether there were any ne
colours fluttering that day, and for many a
jauntily and joyously as the new bright c
Clermont Onslow's heart.

But with what sort of colours was exul
heart of cousin Cecil all this time?

For the answer to this important quest
next chapter will, we hope, sufficiently provi

CHAPTER IX.

THE POACHER'S COTTAGE.

having performed the gentle canter to Rox-
in a manner worthy of her blood and pedigree,
he little purchases completed, Lord Fitzherbert,
g nothing in the old town particularly to inte-
im, after partaking of a sandwich and glass of
le at the 'Roxberry Arms,' proceeded leisurely
s country by a much shorter cut than by the
route in the direction of Fernleigh.

e road on all sides abounded in a succession of
picturesque would have thrown our Walter
erton into raptures, left dinner the last thing to
ought of, and, if done justice to, filled his port-
with untold *Cuyps* and *Gainsboroughs*. But
Fitzherbert, though by no means without an
and understanding, when so minded, for the
et bits," utterly selfish and sensual as he was,
no eye nor heart that day for anything but his

own thoughts, and they were by no me
nature the most poetical or picturesque.

The impression that Annie Lawton's ch
made on his imagination was perhaps the
its sort Cecil Fitzherbert had ever been sens
his life. Lord Fitzherbert had run the usu
of elegant libertinism, and it was not any m
of female loveliness he was at all likely to ad
in imagination, for the substance. On the
it required more than all Almacks, or K
Gardens, or the Opera could produce, to v
eyes, even with Bella Gordon; so, Bella tri
Bella was the reigning favourite. Till ecl
Annie Lawton, no woman, and with fai
stood so high in the good graces of Lord F
as Bella Gordon. But no sooner had his ey
on Annie—and at the moment of all othe
snatched probably from destruction, she ap
him in a light the most enchanting, perh
could have at first been presented to his sight
new vision of incomparable loveliness seem
his soul, by the side of which every other di
the form of woman was unworthy of his
A worthier idol took possession of his I
senses; the perfection of all that he had e
coveted of female beauty and goodness was
in his most ardent dreams he had never d
anything so beautiful! mere self-idolatry

; "reason demanded," as Walter Pemberton
turn,' as well as selfishness;" the goal was
the prize within his grasp,—what would life
and fortune be worth, could another call it
other, by all that was adorable! should ever
—till his heart failed him, and his hand was
less to seize, and hold it, all his own. But
so precious to be carried away so easily?
re no eyes that saw its preciousness, no heart
ted its possession but Cecil Fitzherbert's?
here were? Yes, eyes and heart that ap-
its worth, and longed for its possession to
ardently and earnestly as Cecil Fitzherbert.
of that? Did that in anywise diminish its
ess? No, no! On the contrary, that best
value, that best inspired the necessary nerve
nination for the struggle to obtain it; that
e the keenest zest to its enjoyment when
ied.

p, for him, as was the impression made on
y Annie's charms—their very reverse of
had ever before met with in woman con-
as Walter Pemberton rightly conceived,
enchantment,—and observing, as he soon
fectionate eyes with which she regarded his
was no part of Lord Fitzherbert's tactics, by
Clermont, to throw obstacles, which a little
d dexterity would prevent, in the way of

the scheme his subtle brain was already wo
the attainment of his end. Haste and indis
the pursuit of a desired object never rob
Fitzherbert of the prize in view. He coul
time, confident in the fascinations of h
whether of person or of purse, sooner o
achieve his purpose. Dissimulation sat as ea
as the graceful dress he wore, or the lordly li
Feeling he neither had, nor wished to have, t
with the paramount duty due to self. Se
object, or, rather, only in a secondary deg
were times when Cecil Fitzherbert seemed
selfish of mankind; but those were the most
times in which to trust him; for then, he
the greatest hypocrite, and it required a k
than even Walter Pemberton's or Aunt
quite penetrate the mask.

On this mask that had served him ofte
which he reckoned more than on all his
person or pride of birth and purse to ri
him still, now relied Lord Fitzherbert. It
yet failed him in time of need. When e
resource was exhausted or unavailable, fals
duplicity had stood him in good stead.
of the tree by the fruits it bore. At prese
no cause to complain of its productiveness
It had dropped its golden harvests into h
often in times of want, for him not to know

fruitful yield was still fresh in his grateful
ction; and it would serve him still more, if
tinued but true to himself, and knew the worth,
gent Harvey said, "of the true friend, when he
ot one," and how to "improve the occasion
y," when it offered. With some such thoughts
nost in his mind, as Di carried him pleasantly
Lord Fitzherbert beguiled the way between
rry and Fernleigh. Such a little paradise of
needed no arts to beguile it, peopled with the
ul spirits that alone should have traversed it at
step and made it happy. But Lord Fitzherbert
ien but one paradise in view, every intermediate
which, left to his own solitary communings, was
rt and a wilderness. And what was that paradise,
ow to be attained, that made every intermediate
reach it, though a little garden of Eden to
' eyes, to Cecil Fitzherbert's little better than
rt and a wilderness? The way to the habita-
of the blessed is no sterile, flowerless, fruitless
s some imagine. It is through an ever-teeming
f never-ending joys and glories. But, then, it
way—the *only* way by which they may be
ed. Though but a barren waste, still teems it
with sweetest flowers and fruits unnumbered,
ose who have the eyes and hearts to find them.
ut of the beat as Cecil Fitzherbert most cer-
was to the true elysium, wherefore all seemed

flowerless and fruitless by the way,—his cou
so far correct towards the destined end, that F
stood some half mile before him; when, st
the appearance of a lonely cottage of most
aspect, just visible, on one side, out of the th
firs, and apple, and damson trees in which
almost buried, lying in a hollow about a b
from the Common's verge, and to which his a
had been drawn by the peculiar beauty but sol
of its position, and the air of seclusion and
melancholy stillness that seemed to reign arou
he pulled up; and, waiting the approach of a
girl, with a sickle in one hand and a small b
in the other, coming from the harvest field, e
whose cottage it was.

"Jem Shipton's," was the answer; and, b
and staring his Lordship confusedly in the f
girl made her courtesy, and proceeded on her

"Ah! Jem Shipton's?" repeated Lord Fitz
to himself,—"by George! the very thing
turning Di's head, and retracing his steps
half-quarter of a mile, then taking a semi-ci
as to clear the Common without notice fr
cottagers opposite,—in another five minutes
Di stood together at Jem Shipton's door.

A ragged young urchin, with a torn seal-s
without a crown to it stuck on one side of his
head, and a tin pot in his hand, came runnin

pig-trough in the rear, to see what was the
ter.

Here—hold her a minute," said Lord Fitzher-
, placing Di's bridle in the boy's horny little fist;
d mind she don't get away, there's a fine fellow;"
entering the cottage, a cheerless spectacle met
Lordship's gracious smile.

ord Fitzherbert had often heard of rural poverty
misery in all their direst shapes; but he thought
pictures must be exaggerations, got up to touch
pity and purses of such benevolent-hearted crea-
s as his mother; and, knowing that she sub-
ed liberally to more than one hospital, and he
't know how many things else; had her name to
ood round sum in the newspapers to pretty well
he fashionable charities of the day, and was on the
of patronesses to ever so many other charities be-
s,—it was a comfort to his Lordship to feel that
did all was in their power. He "supposed, it
only consistent with the eternal fitness of things
poverty, as the Scriptures said, should never
e out of the land—which seemed hard, too, by
e! rather, on his mother."

Hitherto, Lord Fitzherbert knew little of poverty
misery but by hearsay; now he saw it face to
, as, entering Jem Shipton's cottage, it stared at
in plain, unvarnished colours, too palpable for
sconstruction or mistake.

flowerless and fruitless by the edstead that
so far correct towards the d om, on which,
stood some half mile b e bulky figure of
the appearance of a l but the nose and
aspect, just visible, striped-cotton night-ca
firs, and apple, five, or, rather, the s
almost buried, shrunk, so haggard, so
from the Cor ough crime and disgrace a
had been d been able, amidst all their rav
of its po every trace of the beauty that
melanc for the pride of Fernleigh, the cove
he pu and the envy of the lasses fo
girl. the lads,
in around,—who merely looking up, as L
w berry entered, waited apathetically till
please his Lordship to announce the purpo
visit. Seldom foot crossed her threshold
aught but sorrow and sad-tidings to Nelly
why, then, should she be in any hurry to
their coming? Or why Betsey, either?
stool by the fire-place, with her elbows
her knees, her cheeks in her hands, an
rivetted on some potatoes roasting in the
bers, over which hung an iron kettle by a
wire, getting hot as fast as the few spark
could make it, squatted, no less dull and
and dogged-featured than her mother-in-l
Jem's wife, Betsey,—thinking what Jem
then in Roxberry Gaol, and "be-boundi

had had a better dinner, a precious sight,
, than she and Johnny outside there, with
liberty;" beyond which, no other signs
xcept a restless sky-lark in a tumble-down
age at the door-porch, were visible in the
cottage.

urniture, or any other article of ordinary
comfort in its rudest sense, a very short
will suffice us. The stump-bedstead and
—if a straw mattrass, a blanket, and patch-
ilt, so tattered and thread-worn as hardly to
a covering, may so be dignified,—the
acked rush-bottomed chair Nelly was sitting
e side of her husband; a couple ditto, bot-
to match; the three-legged stool on which
young Jem's wife, watching the potatoes;
opposite, *en suite;* something after the
f a flap deal table under the window; a
le with a half candle in it; the tin kettle
hearth; two or three odd chipped plates and
handless tea-cup or two; an iron saucepan;
o-pipe and horn lantern,—may be said to
, as far as met the eye, the sum-total of
ipton's worldly goods and chattels; just
-to give Jem all his due—the pig-pot in use
sundry useful sporting tackle and handy
nts, with odd names and odder uses, in a
set up above; and Jack, a shaggy, gaunt,

half-starved lurcher, Jem's faithful boso
and body attendant, lying dozing in the coa

Nothing could well be more squalidly
than the scene of abject penury into wh
Fitzherbert had voluntarily introduced him
drink of water, which he made sure, if
nothing else, there was a well somewher
hand to supply without much trouble; a
first time in his life, his Lordship began to
—as, to put Nelly at her ease, he occupied
chair there was to sit on, while she wen
the water in a mug—some clear conception
poverty really was. How the sight affec
what sympathies it excited, what moral refl
induced, or what charitable resolutions cal
while Nelly was absent on her errand, is n
we can say. But this we know, that noth
have been more in harmony with his I
wishes that day, than the opportunity that
stricken scene afforded him of acting the
maritan, at a moment when, driven to ex
penniless, and prostrate on a sick bed, utte
less and forsaken, famished and furious, J
have sold his soul to the devil for a five
piece.

"Is that your boy?" asked Lord Fi
having swallowed a mouthful or two of t
and reseated himself very contentedly, wh

d herself, for want of another place, on the bed-
—"who is holding my horse there?"
Yes," answered Nelly.
And a handsome boy, too!" said Lord Fitzher-
looking towards the window. "And your hus-
an invalid there, I fear?" continued his Lord-
—after taking another grateful sip of the water,
lacing the mug on the table, and throwing into
one and manner that easy, familiar, friendly
hich no one could put on better than Cecil
erbert, if so it pleased him;—"not very ill, I
?"
Been ailing, off and on, these five weeks," replied
, relaxing a little.
Can the Doctor do nothing for him?" enquired
Fitzherbert.
Doctor's stuff—what good's that," muttered
.
Don't want the Doctor," growled a hollow voice
the nightcap.
elly's eyes glared wildly round the room; but,
ng no other resting-place, sunk on the floor,
, clasping her hands convulsively together in her
her features relapsed into their former gloomy
ness; young Jem's wife remaining crouched
over the embers, watching the potatoes as
e, and "wondering whether Jem had had a
r dinner in Roxberry gaol that day than she and
ny, poor, dear, famished child!"

There was a dead silence for some moment
interrupted by the incessant vaultings of the s
hardly able to contain himself for joy, we sup
the fresh-found little verdant oasis in the
his desert. Wise bird! There are few deserts,
dreary, without their oasis somewhere, as ev
Shipton's lucky star was about to point out
presently—would we find it; instead of, slave
of slothful despair than victims of injust
oppression, beating our poor breasts, and tear
hair, and giving ourselves up to unavailing h
ness and grumbling. Whether we always
the oasis provided in our extremities is
matter. If not, the greater much the mercy!—
greater in proportion, should be our gratitude
always so?

"What does he want most?" resume
Fitzherbert, addressing Nelly.

Again Nelly's eyes took a wild wanderin
of the chamber; and, as before, fell hopelessl
ground.

"What does he need most?" repeate
Fitzherbert, feelingly. "Tell me."

"Food," growled Jem, raising his head
from the pillow, and casting his hollow, hun
on his visitor. "Food—dost know me?"

"I know now," replied Lord Fitzherbert, a
his chair closer to the bed side; "that you
are in want of food."

Say !" faintly echoed Jem, while a savage smile
ed over his rugged face. "Yes—that's how 'tis.
n't *I* say—it's *they* say—d—— un !"
What ?" asked Lord Fitzherbert.
What !" repeated Jem, pushing the cap from his
ples, and glaring fiercely around him. "That
e got plenty—plenty, seize 'em !—plenty in the
oard. Look, there—plenty there,"—pointing with
finger to the ceiling. "Look there—plenty
e,"—pointing underground ;—"look, look !"
Who says so ?" asked Lord Fitzherbert.
Who ?—The Parson—the Doctor—the Squire—
Lowndes—young Onslow, there—cross common,
e him !" muttered Jem, grinding his teeth, and
ing the bed clothes with his fist.
Why should they say so ?" asked Lord Fitz-
ert ; "why say what is not true ?"
Why—dostn't know ? Then—tell him—tell
," mumbled Jem, doggedly returning his wife's
loring look. "Yes, d—— me if I won't ! Why ?—
use I'm Jem Shipton—now you know—poacher
—there—now you know."
And who drove him to it ?" put in Nelly,
ily ; "what turned him from honest ways, to get
onest living ?"
First, snaring a hare in his own garden, very
y," said Lord Fitzherbert, mildly—"that played
c with the young fruit trees ; then another ; then

another, maybe; then, having a fling, mayhap for the fun of it—at a stray covey or two; pop, tit for tat, eh?—not unlikely—at the long then, a set to with Master Rokeby, who l and a turn—just for a holiday—at Quarter S —and—"

A sudden scraping together of the wood ash the potatoes with an iron rod Betsy Shipton sn up from the ingle side, drawing Jem's atten his daughter-in-law—"Yes, d—— 'em! that Roxberry gaol—that's it," he growled, the froth ing on his lip. "Nice sample made of the fathe they?—Pretty sort, bean't it, to shape the boy b

"You have another son, then?" enquired Fitzherbert.

Nelly nodded her head; and Lord Fitz thought he saw a tear.

"What age is he?"

"Twenty-one, come next November."

"He would like to turn his back for ev sure, on Quarter Sessions."

Lord Fitzherbert was now sure the tear delusion.

"When will he return to you?"

"Seven weeks and a day, come to-morrow."

"What is his name?"

"James," sobbed Nelly, spite of Jem's glances; "same as his father."

' Shipton—Shipton—Jem Shipton," repeated Lord
zherbert, seemingly trying to recall something to
memory.—" Yes, that certainly was the name."
Nelly looked up agitatedly, and with livid lips.
Betsy half turned her head sharp round, to better
ch what was coming.
Jem lay on one side, staring full into Lord Fitz-
bert's face, so utterly seared and case-hardened,
t, had it been the warrant coming that consigned
to the scaffold, it could have hardly blanched
cheeks one shade more cadaverous and callous
nplexioned than they were at that moment.
Lord Fitzherbert saw the effect his words had pro-
ed; and, smiling blandly,—" how odd!" said he.
an you be the Jem Shipton—how very odd!—who
the fray with the ghost of Martha Rudge in the
th-field wood, eh?—some nine or ten years ago,
n't it? Where the deuce was it they were
ing about it?"
Jem, callous and cadaverous as he was, was not
of against this home-trust. Though impassible
rdinary emotions, though utterly regardless of any
nishment the arm of the flesh might be able to
ict on him, the scene of the heath-field ghost was
er mentioned to him—albeit, Mrs. Rodney,
eph Munns, and Clermont Onslow were not the
y ones by many who guessed pretty correctly at
truth, and this Jem knew—without a shudder.

Jem never could bear to hear talk of Martha and now his heart felt a cold creeping com and the clammy sweat to be standing on his as that terrible name rang dismally in his ea

Lord Fitzherbert's keen eye penetrated J most thoughts. He had touched the key- saw, and the whole tottering fabric shook beneath the blow.

"Yes," said Jem, partly recovering himsel sharp struggle,—"me—yes—me—and what

"Nothing," smiled Lord Fitzherbert, "n all. It merely occurred to me at the mentio name. Rum affair, by George! that."

"D——d trick!" growled Jem. "D— —pay 'em for it—see if won't, one day."

"Ah! have another touch with them in H copse, eh?" laughed Lord Fitzherbert.

"No—won't—no, not *there*," growled Je

"Wouldn't mind tackling the ghost again and about?" laughed Lord Fitzherbert, risi and putting his thumb and fore-finger into h coat pocket,—"anywhere else, I'll wager."

"What?" said Jem, confusedly.

"Never came across the ghost again, I asked Lord Fitzherbert, good humouredly va question.

"No—seize 'em!" muttered Jem. "C at it! Know better—d—— 'em!"

l I send the Doctor to you? Yes—let me."
o's to pay 'un?"
l pay him, if you will let me."
raised her eyes for a moment wonderingly to
ship's as he spoke; and, then, seeking her
s, let them fall again on her clenched hands.
!—you send him?" muttered Jem,—"who
"
iend. Yes; a friend—it's true; if you will
to be so."
nd!" repeated Jem hoarsely, and raising
p as well as he could on one arm;—"friend
Shipton—friend to poacher Jem?—Who?
here?"
me how I can best be so," mildly replied
zherbert, "and, then, judge for yourself. I
will you let me send a Doctor to you? You
y weak and ill."
k—weak?" echoed Jem, with a hollow
" yes I *be* weak—and so is the mother there
is Betsy there—and the boy out there—
isn't he?—and Jem, he'd be weak, wouldn't
e wasn't where they was *forced* to find him
victuals? Wouldn't you be weak—yes, you,
nothing but a tater in your lips for three
ys—and not them, half enough, to fill a dog's
her? Doctor's stuff—what good's that?
!—plenty, have us?"

"The vicarage," reminded Lord Fitzherbert ingly. "They say no one ever applies there i

"Doan't they?" growled Jem — "doan't Then, I knows they do!"

"Havn't he been ailing off and on," sided catching a glance from her husband; "off these five weeks; and not a human mortal but yours and the bailiffs', crossed the door-st

"Yes, d—— 'em! yes, that's it!" crie vengeance glaring from his eyes; "not a mortal foot-print, not one—not for five weeks it—that's your Christian, is it?"

"If you blaspheme and swear so at friends," said Lord Fitzherbert, reprovingly, " wonder at your frightening them away from

"He don't do it," interceded Nelly; " only when the angry fit comes on him. It —yes it is—to be left to die like a dog—isn a Christian land?"

"I am sure the Vicar would be delighted to him to-morrow, if he wished to see hi Lord Fitzherbert. "Shall I tell him?— come to him to-morrow?"

"*He* come here," cried Jem—"*he* come Shipton's—poacher Jem's—him that would the boy Billy Christian burial?—yes, wo because his father—yes, that's it—because h was a poacher;—he come here—him?—ye him at it—not him."

ldn't give Billy—your own boy Billy, do you
Christian burial?" repeated Lord Fitzherbert,
is eyebrows. "Surely there must be some
stake?"

true—it's true! No mistake—no, no—that
ln't!" cried Nelly, her large black once lus-
s kindling with vengeful fire. "At least-
ere he wasn't, when he was wanted—when
child was carried."

then—d—— me if he would!" gasped Jem,
on his lip, a tiger's fury in his eyes, and a
ack as night passing over his haggard fea-
"That's his religion is it—that's your Chris-
rity—that's your Christ's minister—that's
tor and his flock?—wouldn't put the poor
ent under the turf, when he was paid for it?
d Billy done? Billy warn't a poacher—not
x yet?—was he?—Why was Billy—answer
y was Billy to be buried like a dog? Who
the judgment? *He* come here—*he* come
Shipton's—poacher Jem's—and see the
babe throwed into a hole like a dead dog—
h him at it."

true—it's true—it's true!"—wailed Nelly,
ears rolling down her cheeks, while Betsy,
rocking herself backwards and forwards on
kept up the scraping chorus with the iron

It was a dismal scene Lord Fitzherbert h
tarily encountered in the poacher's cottage.

"And it's him—and the like of him—old
up there," continued Jem, his lips tremb
rage and faintness—"and *them* down at Th
there—and that young limb, Clermont Onsl
seize him!—says we've plenty. Plenty!—
—look then.—Work—work?—who'll
work?—plenty?"—and, sinking back aga
pillow, Jem gave it up from sheer exhaustio

"Food, then, and fuel," said Lord Fi
"Let us see what they will do. There—n
use of that;" and, placing two sovereigns—
stared utterly stupefied with astonishment
into Nelly's hand, and, promising to come
another look in on them in a few days, Lor
bert gracefully bade farewell, leaving Jem h
ful of the evidence of his senses; and slippi
crown piece into Johnny's horney little
than ten minutes sufficed to bring Di and h
to Lucy Onslow's pretty gate.

Lucy Onslow's joy at seeing her nephe
supposed; and Lord Fitzherbert's deligh
bracing his Aunt left nothing to be de
affection could demand. She could hard
her eyes—what a mountain he was grown!
image of his father, her dear brother! He
greater compliment, she was sure. And

quite well again? How proud he must be! t she should not be happy till the roses came se pale cheeks. Ah! London dissipation. s how it was. Well, Marksbury would soon em back again. And his dear mother did ean to run down and see them soon? That e delightful! And Bella, too—she longed to so! How did he like Annie? Wasn't she Yes, and good as beautiful! Didn't he er a sweet creature? And Aunt Gerty—a eerful, sensible soul, wasn't she? He should en Clermont's happy face when he brought news! Well, there was the Cottage, when l a holiday—for they must not neglect their -the shooting season would soon come, now, n said there were plenty of birds and hares. naughty Jem Shipton and his son—but em was in gaol now, the incorrigible!—would e to honest ways—and they had done all they Ben said, there'd be good sport for them nleigh. There was no doing anything for man. He was a bad, wicked, graceless fel- And how pleased she was to hear he was so nd comfortable in his new home! She was would be. Well, who would have ever of seeing him down for so long among them ksbury? Ah!—his very look and voice.

It was like seeing her dear brother, his
once more at her side. Did he remem
father?"

"Oh, yes, very well! Could he ever forget
so excellent a father? And, talking of home
the heart-stirring associations it called forth
long past the Parsonage usual bed-time, befo
could tear himself away; and, when he ent
Vicar's little study, only Clermont was up-
Lawton having made sure he would sleep
Cottage' after his long ride, which she onl
and trusted, for he was still far from
would not throw him again on a sick bed.
she was sure Lady Fitzherbert would never
her, nor she forgive herself."

"I've been thinking," said Cecil, as he shoo
with his cousin, and wished good night, '
pheasants, Clermont, at Fernleigh. Young
aunt says, is bagged. That's a blessing! By
we must do something to bring down the c
and, then, Ben says, we may bang away
barrels are red-hot, my boy."

"Leave it to me," said Clermont, gaily.
day or two we'll get Aunt Gerty and Annie t
the shroud; and, then, you shall see wheth
mont Onslow can't play the ghost just as
Charlie Ferrers."

l, by way of rehearsal, I can see no particular
to that," laughed Cecil. "But, mind you,
further, by Jove!—no—no—wouldn't do
onor—wouldn't do at any price, confound

shall see about that," cried Clermont.
yes—*nous verrons*," laughed Cecil. "A
private theatricals—not a bad idea at all,
then, to get through the long winter evenings
By George!—what say you to some stunning
too, for Christmas?"

CHAPTER X.

"SOMETHING MUST BE DONE."

A WEEK had slipped away since the ev
corded in the last chapter—and O! ho
how insensibly fast will time slip away
days, could they be prolonged to twice their
length, would be far too short for the exh
delights with which every hour teems,—a
Walter Pemberton remained a visitor at the
age. Every day was to be last, positively t
yet, there he stayed, as if bound by some fa
that he could not tear himself away from.
and the term of his holiday was now over, m
over, and the great work for the next Suffol
which was to eclipse all preceding ones, and ma
ley Fielding look sharp after his laurels, stand
—another, and there was a *Gainsborough* on
side of the hill the Vicar had yet to show him
all the others put together!'—another, and

nfab with Clermont, somehow, had not yet
f ;—another, the Squire and Huntworth
had select little friendly dinner-parties fixed,
no excuse could possibly be taken ;—another,
wind in the right quarter was wanting to
is wager with Cecil, which would land the
first with the grey-palmer in the mill-tail
nother, and letters were sure to come next
Hill Street, to fix the day for the Castlemore
arming, for which if he didn't stop, Cecil
t him dead the next time he met him in
;—another, and Annie was working him an
red velvet pin-cushion for his bachelor's toilet-
l it would be the height of ill-breeding and
le not to wait till it was finished ;—another,
ad given Esther Lawton's quinine and port-
wine-glassful of which he and Cecil had
faithfully to swallow regularly every day
before luncheon, *when within reach*—
e at all—and see what wonders it was
-and, last, and not least important—that
ivate conversation with Aunt Gerty, it
dispensable they should come to some clear
ding about before he returned to Gray's
itted of no possible put-off. Wherefore, for
ll of these cogent reasons, time slipped im-
ly away—day followed day—and still re-
Valter Pemberton's departure, as his learned

brother, in the law, would have forcibly expi
a *vexata quæstio.*

But returning in high key one evening
long botanical ramble with Aunt Gerty—(
and Annie having gone over to The Cott
Lord Fitzherbert with the Vicar, to weigh gr
water-melons with Huntworth Lowndes,—
vexata quæstio, if such a question ought
denominated, again coming up, which, at al
proved that the little private point had be
factorily adjusted,—" well then," said Esthe
listen to me—and you know my word is la
patiently till Wednesday ; and, if we don't g
about Castlemore by then—go—go—if you
must. But, if we go—and mind what I say,
—you know the penalty of disobedience w
meet in Pall Mall ? You can take Castlemor
way—pretty much about the same thing, wo
be, as if you went by Copsedenne and Brayb

" And a much nicer road, ten to one !" adc
Gerty—" *Cuyps* and *Copley Fieldings* witho
To this there could be no appeal. The ques
set at rest, and Walter Pemberton resigned
becomingly to his fate, determined, like a tr
sopher, to make the most of the present
lasted — while the sun shone to make
and, by the right use of *carpe diem*, to la
best harvest possible for the rainy day.

presently in came Annie and Clermont, loaded
ney-gifts and floral trophies, and beaming
of joy—to hear how grateful poor Dick
was for his good fortune; and how he was
settled in another comfortable house, and
ired of his subterranean pursuits, to get on
an ever, sticking to the main chance; and
uitless endeavours to find out who his "fair
factors," as he called them, were—for a fair
ful day indeed it was to him! and how he was
his head, about how he should best prove his
e and requite his obligations;—and, the con-
turning on poor Dick's weakest point—
the substance to pursue the shadow—in time
having no thought for the day of want—
ng, in his search for the philosopher's stone,
by the wherewith to make a harvest of the
s; in a word, adversity and its uses affording
ne for discussion that evening, as the lamp
ught in, and Aunt Gerty drew herself and
k to the table:—

promised to write me something in my
said Annie. "You are so poetical to night;
will promise to be as quiet as mice."

n, I wont," smiled Pemberton; "then I
ite a line—that's lucky!" and, taking a pen,
e laid the book open before him,—"your

only chance is, to talk away as fast as you lik
he ; " only please don't whisper ;"—and Esther
settling herself down resolutely to her kn
knitting, provident, painstaking soul ! her
stock of little comfort-stores *before* the time
" knowing only, and hardly that," as she used
say, " that the present hour was hers ;" and C
getting out his compasses and pencils ; and
assuring him " she should not be at all offend
great sprawling hand wouldn't bear compari
Lord Fitzherbert's beautiful fine Italian-char
the opposite page,"—he scribbled off as follo

" When skies are sunny, come
Butterflies out ;
While lasts the money, kind
Friends flock about :
Come but the dark cloud o'er—
Butterflies ?—flown !
Wasted the precious store,
Where the friends ?—gone !

" Happy they, thrice happy !
Who, while they may,
Fail not to lay up store
For rainy day :
While peace and plenty smile,
Howe'er ye mock it,
No friend, in trouble, like
Friend in your pocket.

"O CARPE DIEM! then,
While ye are able;
Think of the fate of poor
Puss in the fable:
Not in prosperity
Prove ye the man;
Friend in adversity
Find—if ye can."

eing universally admitted to be worthy of
h; by Aunt Gerty, too, who, having a beau-
wick-press diamond copy of "The British
bound in Russia, and all Tom Moore's,
Byron's, and Wordsworth's last editions in
gilt, was considered a judge; and, the Vicar
l Fitzherbert coming in presently, and ap-
ighly of the moral,—pleasantly, what with
of reason, and the flow of soul, knitting,
chess, and music, passed the evenings at the
nage house of dear old Marksbury.

os it would have been impossible to find in
gland a happier little circle, altogether, than
ry parsonage presented during Walter Pem-
sojourn among them at that sunny epoch.
'emberton's was a brow that, with all its fair
cares and crosses to disquiet it, seldom, any
n Annie Lawton's and Clermont Onslow's,
loud; because unclouded was the heart from
emanated the radiance that alone gave the
t and lustre to nature's fairest, freshest face.

Nor, while eyes were on him, could any brow w
serener aspect than Cecil Fitzherbert's. Lord
herbert's face, in repose, like Italian skies and c
was no index, unless to the very discernin
smothered wrath, and pestilence, and destru
ready to break out at any moment, and sweep
thing before its devastating fury; of the volcan
the earthquake, or the hurricane, with all the d
attendants that follow in their train. All smile
softness, Cecil Fitzherbert's face might have been
for a perfect model of tranquillity, in its gr
moods; but there was something in it that
more than stilled. It wanted the fresh, full bre
animated life to make it breatheable. It was to
too serene, too unvariedly monotonous, too o
sively placid. As you basked languidly benea
soft, sickly smiles, you longed for the black, blus
cloud to come over, the tempest to spring u
tornado to sweep across, anything almost rather
that stifling stillness—anything that would bring
it the refreshing vigour of a healthy breeze
was a relief when Clermont's hearty, honest voi
heard laughing in the wind; or Walter Pembe
healthy philosophy, honouring and hallowing
thing it touched on; or Aunt Gerty's cheerful salli
Annie's sweet, guileless amiabilities; or even the
comprehensible ambitious soarings; or Esther La
stories, or the sight of her quinine and port-wine

came telling of simple, solid meanings. You understood them—you saw to the bottom of them—there was nothing to beware of—neither poison, nor pestilence, nor earthquake, nor volcano. Even the gathering cloud, and the tear-drops it occasionally let fall were earnests of the spirit of love and beneficence riding on the winds, and bringing healing, and joy, and gladness in every flutter of its wings.

But, with all, a happy little party it was—especially when Rosalie Bainbridge made one, which was pretty well daily—that assembled every morning at Vicar Lawton's breakfast-table at the epoch we are considering; to which, Dr. Dunlop being a privileged addition, all the little village gossip was certain to be brought; and which, as much as anything perhaps, was the reason that the Vicar's wonderful acquaintance with every thing, past, present, and to come, in Marksbury and about, had gained him a repute for knowledge and intelligence, as Tabitha Ludlam said, "quite marvellous to think of."

Famously proceeded the portraits, too, towards completion; though, for some unaccountable reason, there was no getting the finishing touch quite put to Aunt Gerty's. All the rest was easy enough. Hannah, who had taken leave to get a peep while they were at luncheon one day, was in ecstacies! and smuggling in Sam:—

"Let's see," said Sam, perfectly staggered! and

catching up Waddle, who was a great favo
"let's see, if he knows hisself;" and, ad
Waddle's nose to within two feet of his cou
and putting the necessary curb on his impetu
holding tight his tail with one hand, while d
directing his attention to 'hisself' with the o
"There, that's what I call a likeness!" said
Waddle, with a suppressed growl, struggled
get at the intruder,—and, escaping to the kitc
him, still in his arms—"he only wished, th
said Sam, "he'd as good a hillustration of his
and of somebody else, too, he knowed—like a
got Miss Gertrude, which was beautiful!—jus
day, to hang up, when they went to London
bed-room over the four stall in Hay Hill. W
now, what Mr. Pemberton wuld charge for su

This little incident oozing out somehow, an
ing Walter Pemberton's ears, he declared, "
and Sam's judgement were worth all the ot
together! Let any of them find any faults
they dared. If the hanging committee had
eyes and honesty of a dog, Aunt Gerty was a
be hung *in sight*, as, at this rate, he was to
day, if justice were done, President of The Ro
demy, at least; so, he'd have them be up
best behaviour; and have done with their c
opinions, indeed, about the Arts, and artis
authors,—subjects, he would have them to k

t and grave a vast deal! to be approached with
the fitting sense of humility, and—he was
have to remind them—with the profoundest
also!"

day's post bag brought its usual budget to the
ge, and with it, as sagacious Esther had pre-
he expected letters from Hill Street. Lady
ert was, already, with Bella at Castlemore, and
depend on seeing them all over on the earliest
day the Vicar could leave home. She talked
ng to work in good earnest, to put the place
rough repair, and blamed herself extremely
ing neglected it so long. Perhaps, when a
re modernized, and refurnished and re-embel-
he should like it better. She was delighted
lea of the opportunity the Vicar's visit would
r of asking his opinion on several little mat-
nd, 'would Esther remember to bring with her
ipt for the quinine and port wine, which Cecil
m had done him so much good?' There were
ittle notes, too, for Annie, and Aunt Gerty,
cy Onslow, and lots of kindest messages for
nt; so, while these were being duly discussed,
day only the question now remaining to be
for the house-warming—till *the grand day*
r the jubilee, to be unprecedented in the
f all Hampshire—such a house-warming as
ore in its palmiest days had never dreamed

of,—Lord Fitzherbert, escaping to the privacy
room, sat down to the quiet perusal of the l
addressed to himself; consisting of, besides
half dozen from various importunate trad
which, having just glanced at the signatures
threw into a drawer for a more convenient
tunity,—of three letters, one from his mothe
from Bella, and one from Nugent Harvey.

Lord Fitzherbert always made it a point, w
letters, to leave the perusal of the most agreea
the last; so, somehow having shrewd suspicion
Nugent Harvey's should take precedence that
ing, he broke in two the brace of giant's club
kept watch and ward in their vermillion liveri
the portal to his secret treasures, and, fetch
long yawn, read as follows:—

"Jermyn Street, August

"My very dear Cecil,

"Your charming letter of Saturday made my
bound again! It had been as lumpy as les
since you left us. I seem to breathe a-fresh
this morning. I was sure the country air wo
you good. Your firm, cheerful tone assures m
your health is improved. By the way, that c
and port-wine must be no bad thing. What
fort to us all that you feel so settled, and happ
in your new home. And a little earthly para

e I can fancy it must be, by your description! hen, you have such a happy art and power of g everything, that takes your fancy, with such g colours; yet, being so natural, which, in- the great art. Ask your friend, the author- whether it is not much easier, to surprise, by pping and over-colouring nature, than to by painting her simply as she is? The bumpkin that ever 'chawed bacon' can be if you show him a portrait of his pigs, or different to what they are; whereas, he stare delighted, and scratch his thick head onder and enjoyment, touch them off, how- dely, but true to nature. By which you will ny dear pupil, how delighted we have all been our daguerreotypes; which, employing—and the mere daguerreotype fails—employing just n of art as to give a grace to nature, and no re turned out of your hands a model of true and perfection!—like Annie Lawton, say, from her judicious toilette, none the less for the simple pains her good taste has taken ff nature to the best advantage. Ask Walter ton—who, if half as clever a fellow as his I don't wonder at your liking so much—if not so. You know my opinion of the poetry timentalisms of life—of soarings beyond the I have no fear of you there. You know

how ridiculously I was imbued, after I came
Germany, with a good deal more of that so
rubbish than I have patience to think of now
finding that, in my soarings, I soared alike ov
good things as well as bad—while flying aw
fancy, after the prizes on the other side of th
that others were catching them up by handfu
Jove! on this,—I clipped my poetical pinions;
so, being obliged to hop about home alone,
trive, you see, somehow to pick up a tolerable li
—we suppose even Nugent Harvey's cons
stuck at the word *honest*;—"since which, t
the pinions have grown again to their full siz
see, my dear Cecil, I have no sort of inclinat
assure you, to be off from the crumbs of comf
long as I can find them, in peace and plenty,
the old homestead.

"But, really, I don't wonder at your rap
They have played the very deuce with me,
all my philosophy. You are one of the lu
fellows, too, in the world. Absolutely, quite
already! I might have traversed from
End to John o' Groat's, and back again—an
an adventure worth a pinch of snuff; and
are you—basking in the grateful smiles o
bluest and brightest eyes in all Hampshire.
will say, you bear your laurels most becom
wherefore am I proud as a peacock of my

now the highest aim of a great mind, I see. a deuce of a nuisance it is, that there's no per- ace to be found in the world; or—

I said, if there's peace to be found in the world,
The heart, that is humble, may look for it *there*.'

ways a something, isn't there? A deuce of a that Isaacs and Blitton Hawksby can't be d somehow. I am so afraid they'll be worrying nother. That Hawksby's a regular devil when ce up. We must think of something, my dear that's pos. Houghton Palmer came in yester- would have written, but don't want to bother The Office at him again. *Something must be* bout those confounded accumulations, which nning up like wild-fire. Had some chat about e were talking about at Club. Thinks there be no difficulty, with your mother's bond. I sound her about it the first chance? You rather not; and so should I, if anything else can e. *Nous verrons*. Meanwhile, let's try and short work of the small fry with all despatch, y'll be thorns—bother them!—rather, I'm in your rosy bed at Marksbury. With your r's bond, every man Jack of 'em might be sent right-abouts in eight and forty hours. Give it ght.

our kind congratulations on my parlour-chair at

Saints have done much to reconcile me to t
a swinging one! I can tell you, I have had t
it. *N'importe.* I am full of hope; and, y
hope, with me, is somewhat rather a more
affair than Campbell deals in. Only let th
Vein,' my boy, go on a little longer as it's do
and the others double themselves, as they
at this rate, in three months; and then, eh?
you to a shake down, when you come up,
Place, or thereabouts; and, who knows, a Mrs
Harvey, one of these fine days, all in good
your mother insists on—to preside at the litt
social dinners, eh, my boy? There's for you
yourself perfectly happy, though—most ce
shall run down and have a day or two with y
Fernleigh covers. How are you off for dogs
can have Don and Rock from Castlemore
worth much, I suppose, at Fernleigh? Lots
you say—that's all right. There ought to b
sprinkling, too, of hares. Fernleigh lies well,
says—from whom, kindest remembrances, an
sort of thing—between the Squire's, and
Beagler's. Plenty of rabbits about Thorne
By Jove! we must have another touch at
gether some day at Castlemore.

Your mother and Miss Gordon go down,
Monday, and talk of doing great things.
little taste, I do really think, my dear Cecil,

place might be made pleasant enough. For myself, you know, I like the air of wildness and solitude that reigns around it, worth a thousand of the neat, compact, be-villad, cockneyfied conceits, they call their country seats now-a-days. Let your mother only spend half as much pains on it as she has done on the Richmond villa, and it will soon be gay enough.

"I calculate much on your all meeting together, such a merry party next week—and all so tasteful—to do wonders for it. Can I get a day—run down I shall to a certainty; but am half afraid, as Sir Felix talks of going into Berks on Thursday. And then shall see Annie Lawton, your charming sketch of whom has filled me with admiration. But, whether present or absent, you know, my dear Cecil, you will have all my heart and best wishes!

"I am sure I shall like Clermont Onslow, if he's only half as handsome and honest as you paint him; and Aunt Gertrude; and good, hospitable, kind-hearted, pains-taking Esther; and all of them;—to whom, one and all, express, in your most felicitous style, my sincere hopes of speedy better knowledge, and long lasting friendships. And now trusting, my dear Cecil, that, amidst all the charms and fascinations by which you are surrounded, you will not forget our last long chat together; but be a good, diligent, sensible boy—mind your books—improve the golden opportunity at your command, while yet it is yours—

cull the honey while the flowers last; rem
the old adage, '*Qui fugit molam, fugit f*
and, so, make glad and proud, indeed, the
your old tutor, by verifying his predictions, t
thing in the world with a head and heart
Fitzherbert's—with best wishes and brig
pectations,

"Believe me,

"Ever yours devotedly

"

"P.S.—Drop me a line as soon as you ca
moment, about what you think had better be d
that Isaacs and Blitton Hawksby. There's
Palmer can get a little longer time. I'll see h
it at once. Something must be done."

Having twice read the letter of his "ol
from beginning to end, Lord Fitzherbert sa
in his hand, with his eyes fixed on vacancy
compressed lips, for several minutes; when, t
on the table, and taking up No. 2, his n
"Be a good, diligent, sensible boy, eh?" sa
faint smile passing over his face for an
"mind my books; improve the opportunity;
honey while the flowers last; make glad the
my tutor, eh?—Yes—yes—no fear of it,
Nugent, with a head and heart—" and L
herbert laughed outright,—"with a head and

save us!—with a head and heart the like of
tzherbert's—what can be easier? ah! what,
Yes, Master Nugent—Cecil Fitzherbert *will*
the opportunity—*will* cull the honey, Master
while the flowers last. Most wisely coun-
-that is his intention, Master Nugent—you
;" and, breaking his mother's little pale-pink
rd Fitzherbert went on calmly with the task
to be performed.

Fitzherbert's letter was short; as "she should
darling boy again so soon." Her gratitude to
ice, for having made him the preserver of
nnie and Aunt Gerty, was unbounded! "more
y, for having so signally watched over him in
t danger and its consequences; and blessed
awton's excellent endeavours so conspicuously,
him from a sick, it might have been, a death-
aven be thanked for it!"

ost promising account followed of "The
in," and the other pet investments, which had
her rather for a time, as she had paid up
but prospects were most cheering! The
otypes were inimitable! His portrait of Annie
d her and Bella with the greatest curiosity,
with their own eyes. But they were prepared
ctrified. He must do his best to persuade
, Lucy Onslow, if well enough, to make one
party over. They would leave Hill Street

on Monday, and should expect a letter b
addressed to them at Castlemore, to say on
she might look for them. The old house
determined, should have a thorough rout out;
she thought, as Nugent Harvey did, that
be made cheerful and comfortable enough.
going to take down heaps of things, and wa
as a bee about them. So, "in the hope of
him to her heart again so soon—the th
which would rob her—but that she didn't
every wink of sleep till the happy hour ca
committing him to the care of Him, whose
ever watchful to guard from every ill His
remained, as she should ever remain, with
good, dear, darling boy's ever anxious, lovin
"

"Cramped rather for cash, eh?" mentally
Lord Fitzherbert, dropping his mother's let
table, and taking up No. 3, Bella Gc
"cramped rather—A bore that!" and, layi
open before him,—"there's no gammon
all events," said he, "whatever else there
read as under:—

"Hill Street, Au

"My dearest Cecil,

"I have purposely deferred replying to
dear letters containing the 'daguerreotype

ning !—in the hope of being able to tell you, *ain*, when we shall be at Castlemore. Joy, e day is fixed. Your dear mother has posi- cided that we shall go on Monday. So, now e no dream, that we are really and truly to ain in a few days. O, Cecil! does the of that fill your heart with as much joy as it e? Not a wink of sleep have I had for the nights, fearing your mother might alter her nd go to that dull Richmond, or to Hastings, you know, she talked of, kindly thinking the would do me good. Nothing could have done uch good as a ramble about Castlemore. I I feel quite well at the bare thought of it. ur mother is going to do such great things! transmogrify the old place; fit up the boudoir rooms a-fresh; and, if she have her health, , perhaps, six weeks—there's for you! And shall go to St. Leonard's for a month. So, fancy how busy, and how happy I am!

u may call me 'a silly goose' if you like. In se, perhaps, I am a very silly one—in not le to disguise my feelings better. You know could. Fifty times within the last week have up, O, such solid barriers, Cecil, all around t down they all go—go, you see, like shadows, oment. But you are generous. While you *silly goose*—candidly, would you have me one

whit wiser if you could? I cannot dissem
events, with you. Is this being the
nature" that you have so often called me?
Cecil—no, no—I am no child of natu
Lawton is a child of nature—not Bella Gor
father and her mother know every secret
any—of Annie's heart, as well as Annie do
can I say as much with my dear mother?
mother, no less than yours, Cecil; for a
dear, good, kind, careful, affectionate mother,
has been to me! Dare I, as my soul longs
open the secrets of this deceitful heart o
those eyes which regard me with so much
and love, and from which I ought never
thought or action hidden? Oh, no!—I d
dare not! I am no child of nature—no—no-
so deceive myself. The child of nature is all
simplicity, and candour, and artlessness, a
ness — like sweet, simple, guileless, hap
Lawton! What am I? O Cecil, to you, I
I'm afraid, can I look for an honest answ
anxious question. Your fondness, your
your blindness to my failings will not allo
see me, to think of me, to judge me with
and understanding you will some day, perh
regard me with. Yes, in truth, what am
so silly a goose with all my foolishness—
but that I can supply the answer withhel

and generosity. I will tell you what my
rt tells me that I am,—a hypocrite—a dis-
There is a confession from a child of

, yet, I say that I am happy. And so I am;
r, not so wretched as I should be, if your
ther were to send up Norton at this mo-
dash to pieces at a blow all my beautiful fairy
not one particle in the fond construction of
ould I just now exchange—silliest of silly
for the solidest castle that your sedate, sen-
rt and hands ever built up wherewith to
self complete; or even to be mistress—a
mpli, apparently, would I have it so—of the
content, building for me—if I will only
Norton says, 'on which side my bread is
'—somewhere near Belgrave Square—by no
rchitect of happiness than Nugent Harvey.
amazed. Is it that you are angry, or pleased?
quite afford to congratulate me if you
worth your while—

* * * *

e, then—that was nature's debt—would no
e denied. 'Twas a righteous penance due;
been paid, so far; and my goose's silly heart
ter by a feather.

"Yes, there is to be a castle of content
in Belgravia; and the little wife, with all c
speed, to crown its honours. And no o
and opinion so indispensable, I would ha
know that, as Bella Gordon's. But, as
meet so soon, I shall reserve all about this,
pleasant matters thereunto appertaining, I
interest you, for a sweet, quiet *tête-à-tête*
my opinion of Annie, be sure, till I can
myself, whether she is the perfect angel you
her. You know you have nothing to fear
candour. On the contrary, think as you pl
prepared not only to admire, but to love h
are such total opposites, you say—there c
odious comparisons, nor competitions, nor
caps, that's a comfort, between the brunett
blonde. So, now, my silly heart beating a
rate with the thought of the joys in store f
I hardly know, and that's true, what I am ab
it being high time I got these red, swollen
eyes a little into fit trim to meet such a co
as Mr. Nugent Harvey; and living for n
almost as eagerly—silly goose again!—as if
of only of ten days, we had not seen each
twenty years; and having a vast deal mor
what with plans, and purchases and, packi
Castlemore, than, had I two heads and fo

l ever be able to get through, wasting my
this rate,—farewell for the present, my
Cecil; and, with best love to Annie, if you
it with suitable decorum, ever believe me

" Your devotedly affectionate,

" BELLA.

. Be sure we have a letter at Castlemore by
o say when we may expect you. Lady Edith
ten charmingly about it to the Vicar."

different the impressions created in Cecil
ert's mind by Bella Gordon's letter, to those
l by his mother's and Nugent Harvey's.
nother's was—" a matter of course"—a repe-
the same old " eternal sing-song," as he called
had been accustomed to as long as he could
er—" thoroughly motherly, no doubt—he had
e it somewhere—knew it all by heart before
e the seal, dear old creature! But Harvey's
siness—and business of a very disagreeable
too—dished up as palatably as possible—sweets
ters artistically compounded; but the staple
—Messrs Isaacs, Hawksby, and Co., standing
bold unmistakable relief, impossible to be
. Not a feeling was excited by its perusal
doubt and dread—*Something Must Be Done!*

Perhaps no four English words could h
linked together less musically to Lord Fit
ears at any time than those four words—S
Must Be Done. But at that moment wh
new elysium, visions of peace, and joy, and
from all worldly intrusions had taken pos
his soul, promising a harvest of calm, unin
delights, with only the full leisure to enjoy t
fectly—nothing could have seemed more h
inharmonious. Bella's fond, flattering ap
somewhat soothingly after them. It touche
at once of pleasure as well as pain—the pleas
predominating. It gratified his vanity, t
jarred somewhat with the whim; he was
and yet oppressed; he would have been d
with less, and yet was overloaded. "Silly
said he;—"a *fait accompli*, if she will." If
Ah! true—how grateful, Cecil Fitzherbert, y
to be! If she will! And why not? A
comfort—*ma foi!*—and of Nugent Harvey's
in Belgravia! Might do worse. Rather
and cheese in a cottage with her Cecil—silly
and, dropping the three letters into a pock
portfolio; after a look in the glass, Cecil Fi
sought Annie Lawton—to deliver, with all
of which he was master, Bella's love-fraught
piping hot.

But not all the melodies of Annie's sweet, dulcet
es that day, could drive from his recollection
e three jarring words of his "old tutor's,"
mething Must Be Done,' three words, perhaps
most uncongenial that at any time, as we
e said before, but, just then, more especially,
d have been dropped into Cecil Fitzherbert's
le ear.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CORONET AND THE COUNSELLOR'S

LEAVING Annie and Aunt Gerty to the
and the settlement of the Castlemore qu
the Vicar and Lord Fitzherbert, Walter F
strolled out with Clermont; and, taking
along the hill-side, was soon revelling, to
clusion of all subjects seemingly, in his
themes—"the glorious study," as he call
nature, and the infinite objects of wonder
dom she unfolds at every step, for man's
enjoyment, with only the right eye and
appreciate the boon.

Soft, refreshing showers had fallen du
night, waking up nature, after her long leth
renewed life and renovated strength and
all she wanted to assert her supremacy, and
thousand-fold, the heavy obligations she evid
under, and, as the first earnest of it, to sen

ing on the air the fragrant incense of her
gratitude. How the trees wept for joy
e flowers cocked their saucy heads, the
nced and babbled, and the groves laughed
in happy chorus, who is there does not
It was one of those delicious mornings
r a long drought, all nature seems drunk
saturated with excess of love; not the
thing that breathed, but taking part and
n the universal banquet, nature's jubilee!
ch none are excluded, but all are equally
, to take their fill at to repletion; one of those
piring mornings, when the spirits feel they
r imbibe enough of the grateful draughts
down for their enjoyment.

etest of all sweets this, is it not?" exclaimed
'emberton, standing still for a moment as
nd up the slope, to more thoroughly take in,
, and enjoy the 'feast of feasts' around
he called it. "Is not one short hour thus
rth, to the true soul, whole ages of what
life, and the enjoyment of it, in pent-up
crowded halls?"

the true soul,' yes, doubtless," responded
. "But 'the crust and clean shirt' are no
scernible, I'm afraid, look which way you
the hill-side here."

, true," smiled Pemberton. "Fortunately

for some one I have a great regard for
not."

"Ah! you think if they were," rejoined
"the regarded one would hug himself in
nity too complacently."

"Nakedness and starvation," replied
"are certainly attributable to more causes
fortune."

"Can 'the true soul' fear misconstructi

"No; if that were all, it might snap
But it does not breathe, and see, and hear,
and wish, and aspire, and picture, and
itself alone, however true."

"How seldom do you find two souls w
thies identical," sighed Clermont.

"Many more than you suppose, I fancy.
'crust and clean shirt' are stern philos
you say."

"You think, I must have done with
souls congenial; and aspire to something
the crust?"

"I do not see that the Vicar feeds us wi
better, or himself either; nor that Miss A
to have any particular objection to a plain g
or a pretty bonnet."

"Ah! now I understand your philoso
Clermont, the colour rising to his cheeks.
some judgment in that, I grant."

admit that?"
would be wise, I must, it seems."
t!" repeated Pemberton, cheerfully. "You
—you do—your whole heart and soul is
tending, seem indifferent as you may. In
cannot see but that the Vicar is right, can

ctly! The plain good dinner and pretty bon-
means; but will they suffice?"
ris paribus, it is to hoped so," smiled Pem-

no doubt—*cæteris paribus*," said Clermont,

er a large margin you think, to fill up satis-

not think so once."
long have you thought otherwise?"
long?" repeated Clermont, again blushing
ntly confused—"how long? Well, then
re has been so much talk of the Linwood
nd—and—"
cousin Cecil Fitzherbert's eventful arrival at
ry parsonage, I suppose?" added Pemberton,

—nonsense! What has my cousin Cecil to
it?"
incere, I rejoice to hear you say so. You
w, then—that the *cæteris paribus*, since Lin-
ne about, not so easy an affair?"

"Before Linwood came about, there wa
like Marksbury."

"Ah! and before cousin Cecil came a
was no one like cousin Clermont. Nay,
we not understand each other. You see I a
we shall."

"I see it would be difficult," agreed Cle
disguise with you."

"You would deceive yourself more
smiled Pemberton. "Why deceive either

"Why indeed? You know all, you
and yet I have not told you a word," rej
mont, more animatedly. "Now I feel
times happier."

"My dear fellow," returned Pemberton
"you feel happier, because you have fou
congenial you longed for. Your's is a
which dissimulation never can sit becomin
nothing to do with it. You can't imagi
queer figure you cut in it. Any one can
wretched fit it is—never made for you—no
No, no—stick through thick and thin, t
style, that's beautiful! You are a dec
fellow enough in that—as, more eyes th
fancy, in Marksbury, worth caring for,
out. Stick to that; put your strength wel
your wits to work; and, least of all, zou
have it to say,—that Clermont Onslow,
fell beneath the required standard, becau

ng measure of his own fair capabilities, and
d under."
other words, I'm a lazy, cowardly dog,"
Clermont; "and must be told so, if I will not

ll, as it seems," rejoined Pemberton, "that
d plain dinner, and the pretty bonnet some-
pend on it—I see no alternative. But, se-
have you given up all thoughts of the
,

an't feel that sincere desire—that strong,
alling for it," replied Clermont, "which I think
to feel."
!—how is that?"
ere was a time," continued Clermont mu-
" when I loved the thought beyond all others."
the hussar's jacket, and Miss Annie's ap-
smiles, one day, changed your mind."
t altogether so," replied Clermont, reddening.
to think, of all happy lives, a country clergy-
ust be the happiest."
d have you seen good reason to alter your
? Remember, the rule may hold good, not-
nding the supposed exceptions."
ue. If the exception were confined to old
ury alone, it would be nothing. I can under-
at. But look at Thorney—look at Bonning-
ok at Roxberry. Is there what you may call

a thoroughly happy hearth to either of the
sort of happy hearth there ought to be—
looks for—one expects to find in a parson's

"What do you expect? You look, per
more than poor humanity, at best, can
Clergymen are but mortals."

"So it seems. Many of them hardly
think, do they, they are under any ve
obligations to the fleshly plea," replied
"Whether or not, can you sincerely call th
clergy, as a class, a happy race?—happ
sense Christ's ministers ought to be?"

"If not in your simple sense," answered
ton; "the fault does not rest exclusively w
While society sanctions one day what it con
next, we must not pass sentence hastily."

"Well, though the hussar's jacket, I'll o
sued Clermont, "*had* charms—and, may b
less because Annie liked it, too—my mothe
wish had been gratified long ago, could I h
anywhere the pastoral peace my heart ha
somehow, associated with the idea of
pastor's life."

"You desert the fair mark; because, in
enthusiasms, you overshoot it. Is that wis
Pemberton.

"Not if I could bring myself serio
earnestly, and determinedly to take the se

hole heart and soul ought, I think, to answer
ly to the call, before they dare to call them-
even in expectation, ministers of Christ. Look
me where I will; though I wish—earnestly
I could, to feel the call; and would, heart
l, respond to it at this moment if I felt it,—
t—I cannot feel it as I know I ought—as I
efore I would ever consent to be a parson."
is a hopeless case, then, I'm afraid," said
ton. "You must think of something else.
was one place under the sun more than
where one would have come to, so inclined,
he call, it was, surely, Marksbury."
e, what can the Vicar require more than his
ere?"
y the *Cuyp* yonder there," replied Pember-
inting over the hills in the direction of Lin-

uld he be happier if he had it?"
one whit—in your sense, happier."
w can I feel the call, then, to be a parson?"
Clermont. "Not a Sunday, but he tells us
satisfied and thankful with our lot—of the
ambition—of the sin of discontent; then, how
eel the call? I cannot see in this, and the
it on every side—the fulfilment—the accom-
nt I seek for, of Christ's intentions with his
s; far from it."

"You had better think of something
peated Pemberton. "Your mother can
wish you should embrace the Church, if y
give your whole heart to it. Which
your fancy most?—To be a country gent
warrant; a gentleman farmer, with a cle
and a snug homestead like 'The Cottag
own; lots of cows, pigs, and poultry, a
Newfoundland dog, a brace of setters, a
like Aunt Gerty's, and a pair of blue ey
and beaming as Annie Lawton's, to crown
no bad fancy, either; a very pleasant sort
I must admit."

"But, to entitle to the possession
smiled Clermont, elatedly—"I must first
title, you mean. Good! If I thought
pended on *that*."

"It will be the dream, or the reality; pr
I fancy," said Pemberton, "as you mak
the other, so yourself. To the army ther
of course?"

"Oh! yes," sighed Clermont—Lawre
trait of his father standing full length,
brilliant colours, before his gaze.

"Don't sigh about it. I'm in earne
be happier as gamekeeper, my dear f
a general."

"Do you think so?"

u have not a quality—but what attaches to
a gentleman—either of head, or heart—to fit
a soldier. Such glory as you would win, is
rned, I take it, rather in the senate, my dear
nt, than by the sword. Why not be a coun-

ve I the right stuff in me for it?"
th teaching and training, and a bit of a curb
rampant conscientiousness, a good deal of it,
" said Pemberton. "You don't know what
u yet. How can you? You never try your
."
it would help me some day into the pleasant
ad you sketched so faithfully just now,—tell
best to put it out—I would not spare it."
's see," said Pemberton; "what is the look-
At your mother's death—may the day be far
u will have, you say, some two hundred
a year, clear, Three-per-Cents; 'The Cot-
nd lands, worth, say at least another hundred;
n, there's the little growing legacy of your
in the Three-and-a-Half-per-Cents. So,
e've got the crust and clean shirt all safe—so
But that's not quite enough. 'Annie,' says
er—and justly, too,—'besides that, must have
plain wholesome dinner, and plenty of it,
ay of the week; and her bouncing brats, too,
ave any; and a pretty bonnet, besides, without

stinting for it, when she wants one. R
enough. Credit me, one-half the strength
you—for we've said nothing of that yet—
all—yes, all—and over; nay, allow of the se
sand Mrs. Clermont Onslow will be coming
of these sad days, in right of her mother,
apart, and settled snugly on herself and bra
then—if—if—Aunt Gertrude should not m

"Not marry!" laughed Clermont, loo
into his companion's face—"not marry?—
hypocrite!"

"I?" laughed Pemberton,—"I know
That's a good one! Well, I only say—*if*
there's another lucky windfall some day
Annie. But all this—extremely encoura
is—is, you see, in prospect only. Waiting
folks shoes is slow and sorry work. Wh
to the wise and industrious? No, no—not
the 'cottage and content,' all in good seasor
the aim. But, as a stepping-stone, a firs
the little paradise—what possible objection
be to the counsellor's wig—just tell me—
high, expanded forehead, those intelligent
forensic nose and chin?—a snug homeste
over, somewhere near Hyde Park; a leader
as fate, on the Western Circuit; and
thousand a year, more or less, inside the w
make up for spoiling those nice locks."

u can paint charmingly," smiled Clermont.
d truly, I hope," trusted Pemberton.
nust have done dreaming, you mean; and up,
n the title to my coveted possession?"
no other way can I clearly see your title to it.
icar is ambitious—looks high—the Lawtons
did. Linwood has charms, I fancy, far be-
he value of its living. It had been yours,
you have so willed it. As it is, you must
ne consequences of your own act and deed.
ee, you must be something more—with Lin-
in view—from whence it comes, too, and to
leads,—than plain Squire Onslow, of 'The
e,'—to carry off Annie Lawton. No, no!
Clermont; the Vicar can do better than that,
inking. And so must you be. Lancelot
is an ambitious as well as loving father,
nt Onslow. Charms like Annie Lawton's fall
few women to call their own. By George! as
Cecil says, 'she is worthy to be a duchess!'
Clermont."
ne is! What chance will the counsellor's wig
' sighed Clermont, "beside the coronet?"
Lancelot Lawton's eyes, a far better, I fancy,
s first brief to keep it curled," answered Pem-
—stopping short—and holding by a button—
as the natural *sequitur*, the woolsack beckon-
the distance; than all the Clermonts would
ttages of content in Christendom. And with

Annie, if I mistake not, you have the best
cates already."

"You think—you really do, then," said
brightening—"it rests, mainly, with myself,
lose."

"What have you to fear," answered P
"but not coming up to the required stan
fulfilling the requisite *cæteris paribus?*"

"With such odds against me, is that so

"Odds? Pooh! I'm ashamed of you.
what are you, to be exempt? Of course,
knows of your attachment for each other?"

"Is there any thing escapes him that he
know? Certainly he knows it—he must k
he cannot but know it. It has been as
an understood thing for, oh, I can't tell you h
He has frequently alluded to it, that I know
versations with my mother; not, maybe,
intentionally—but indirectly, inferentially."

"Ah! you must come to something mor
than that, for business. It is just the
have to do, and for a rich reward, too.
must *do it*. Who are you, to walk off
prize for asking? Think you the Vicar do
its value? Are yours the only eyes se
in it? Odds?—yes, heavy enough, in sob
So much the better. The sharper the stru
greater the merit to get it. Let's see then
side, the coronet; on the other, the Counsel

Ah! neck-and-neck. Well, and what then? away! Which wins?—Lancelot Lawton? odds? Who gives the casting vote? For of you! Coronets *versus* woman's constancy. ermont Onslow! know you fond woman's so little, Clermont?"

ou fill me with joy," exclaimed Clermont. yes—I see—she will think more of me, when ows what I can and will do for her sake!"

great deal—you're right," agreed Pemberton. time been no object—and I don't see why it be—a year's travel, well employed, would do rs for you; break the link of old associations; ve the right impulse wanted, before you settled n earnest to the drudgery."

ou have hit the wish I have often indulged," ed Clermont; "but somehow—"

siren charm, all powerful, has kept you migra- tween Fernleigh and Marksbury; the Parsonage he Cottage,—'faith! one way to know the —till they have become your little all of life; e first pair of admiring eyes that come to look nie, robs you of your rest as if you were a r—a very poacher; instead of the rightful Lord aster on your own undoubted manor."

here would you go?"

nywhere, rather than only to Fernleigh; or Bon- n and back—when Tom and Jerry want an or a pair of new streamers."

"Will you talk with my mother about i
row, if you get a chance?"

"Yes, if you like."

"And, then, I will hear what the Vicar

"It will meet with his approval, I can
you," said Pemberton.

"I suppose so," returned Clermont, tho
"And Aunt Gerty?"

"Is anxious for it above all things; as
friend should be."

"And—and—Annie?"

"Can have but one wish either—to—"

"Yes, yes," said Clermont eagerly,
passing from his brow, as the ride home fro
with all its treasured remembrances flashed
thoughts, and those dear words, never to be
"why require you a promise?—I ask you
sounded in his ears,—"I must have been a
have doubted it. How selfish and short-si
our passions make us!"

"They do indeed," said Pemberton.
never so much masters as when we face the
More than half our troubles date from o
fear of them. The bravest conquests b
those we have to boast of over ourselves. A
with us to-day—there they are, then, comi
hill-side, looking for us. So, a truce, to
for to-day. Let's go and hear what fun Miss

· us; and if they've settled the day for the run
› Castlemore."
nd then we are to lose you?" said Clermont,

or a short season only, I hope," replied Pem-
. "We have both our work to do, my dear
ont—our titles to obtain, if we would gain and
ossession. Some day, and not long hence, we
alk of this morning-stroll with mutual joy, I
and then we will compare prizes. That, let us
will be a happy day equally for us both."
While your words fall like a gladdening sun-ray
heart," said Clermont, "a dark cloud seems to
it, and say, that day will never come to me."
onsense!" cried Pemberton. What are you
ng of? Stuff! Look again. Now were there
veeter smiles than are hastening to welcome you
moment? What on earth would you more.
a cloud, if you can, on that unsullied brow?"
am a silly, selfish, ungrateful booby!" said
ont, hurrying on.
o penance for it, then," whispered Pemberton,
udden turn brought them within thirty yards of
ther; "and go and make Rosalie happy, do you
like a man; while your cousin trys his best to
much for Annie Lawton."
h! and leave you and Aunt Gerty all alone to
nischief?" laughed Clermont. "Excellently well
ged, Mr. Pemberton."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRIZE IN PROSPECT.

SINCE his ride with Annie to Bonnington back, enviable in the extreme had been the of Clermont Onslow's heart. He felt as on air. In the exuberance of his feelings have embraced every one he met. Not but was invested with new and brighte The world was a beautiful world; and all th tained, as it then met Clermont's eye, peace and harmony. The Vicar's gravit him passing well; Esther Lawton's stories short; where was such another little non-su aunt to be found as Aunt Gerty; Walter I was the sterling friend indeed; and a ve pattern of a cousin, Cousin Cecil. Nor Sam's merits overlooked, who found caus siderably qualify, on better acquaintance pinion of Mr. Clermont; seeing that "al

l not talk much, he knew a good deal more of a
ss' than some that talked more." Nor failed
nnah and Humphrey, and Mrs. Hopkins, as prin-
als, to come in for considerable applause; while
a hand on the place but had some private reason
self-congratulation since fair-day; so that, in
nparing notes in the Pastor's kitchen, and in the
age, between the Cousins,—if his Lordship carried
day for polish and politeness, Master Clermont
ght bear comparison with the highest noble in the
d for gentleness and goodness.

As disguise or duplicity in any shape, with Cler-
nt, was a thing impossible, the Vicar's penetrating
was not long in reading to the bottom of his
ileless pupil's open heart. He saw at a glance how
tters stood, and, without gesture or comment,
k his cue accordingly. That he was prepared
all he saw there is little doubt; but, had he not
n, as circumstances then demanded, his course
d been no different, and his conduct just the same.
was now his *duty*—it was now indispensable,
hout further delay, to carry out his mother's wishes,
d come to some determination, for his own sake
well as hers, as to the settled path of life he meant
choose. It was a promise he had made, and a
ty he no less owed to the parent than the child;
d he would not shrink from it, however painful it
ght be to part with so good, so dear a pupil!

Simple and, so far, straightforward enou
Lancelot Lawton's cue. Nothing could b
right and reasonable than that Clermont shou
no longer time. He had already, perhaps,
much, if the year's travel should be decided
which he saw no objection, if it had his
sanction; and, joining his pupil next morni
early stroll, nothing could be easier than to
conversation into the channel wanted.

"Have you read the account in ye
'Times,' Sir," asked Clermont, eagerly,
turned into the wood-walk from the shrubb
the monster nugget they've found somewh
Bathurst?"

"A hundred weight, don't they say?"
the Vicar. "Incredible!"

"An authenticated fact, Sir, I believe."

"Ah! may be. The gullibility of yo
hunters, Clermont, is prodigious. A little
puffing for the Turon diggings, possibly."

"No; I really do believe it, Sir."

"You do? And how much did they
it?" asked the Vicar, smiling.

"The total weight obtained was, the
hundred and six pounds," replied Clerm
citedly.

"It seems, don't it? almost a physical
bility," said the Vicar; "something so be

pe of mere ordinary human calculations, as to uire the evidence of one's eyes to credit it."

" It does almost, Sir. The mass, as at first dis-ered, was, they say, between two and three hun-d weight. Just fancy, Sir!"

" And what was its worth in money sterling?" quired the Vicar, becoming interested.

" Four thousand pounds! they say. A pretty 's work for Dr. Kerr."

" Enough to turn them all crazy, my dear Cler-nt, if not mad enough already."

" Well, Sir," continued Clermont, after a moment two's silence, " I have often thought I should e, above all things, to go and see the diggings."

" The diggings?" repeated the Vicar, stopping ort, and regarding his pupil earnestly from under s pent-house brow.

" Yes, Sir!" repeated Clermont, firmly. " If I d a friend, for a companion, of the same mind as yself."

" And I don't know but that so might I," said e Vicar, resuming his walk, " if I were a young an, with no one to think for but myself, and othing better to do."

" What a deal of life one might see," pursued lermont.

" Plenty of that," agreed the Vicar.

" And only fancy, Sir, turning up four thousand ounds in one morning!"

"Very gratifying, Clermont, I must adm
But for one such fortunate turn up, how mar
think you, from their golden dreams, beg
broken hearted?"

"A great many no doubt, Sir. But if
had so argued, Sir?"

"Ah!" smiled the Vicar, "there it
naked possibility! How it clothes every
golden colours! and for one wise man of u
fifty fools. Well, I declare, you are the
Clermont, my dear fellow, I should have
would have run riot in golden dreams. But
If you make such liberal use of your mon
you've got it, as I fancy you did at Bonni
fair-day last, all the Turon diggings will
able to keep pace with it."

"I, Sir—I—at Bonnington?" hesitated C
blushing up to his ears. "How, Sir—ho
know, Sir?"

"Oh! I know nothing," smiled the V
only guess."

"You quite misunderstand me, Sir—qu
claimed Clermont, blushing still deeper,
Vicar's eye was on him. "No one can
a lover of gold — for gold's sake, Si
myself."

"I know it—I know it, my dear fello
half careful enough with it. You needn'
that—do you think I don't know it? You

re selfish, I'm afraid, before you will ever be a rich
n, Clermont."

" I do not desire riches for myself, Sir."

" Yet, your eyes sparkle—see now—look at them!
the bare idea of turning up another four thousand
the Turon."

" My eyes sparkle, Sir, and my heart beats, if I
d a trout worth taking, or flush a cock."

" Ah! true, true," smiled the Vicar. " I don't
nder at it. Zounds! life in Marksbury, at your
, would have made my eyes sparkle, and my heart
t, I fancy, had I hooked a little minnow, or shot a
n-tit."

" You had some conversation with Mr. Pemberton
ut me yesterday, Sir, I believe?" asked Clermont.

" Yes, a long chat, as we returned from the
uire's."

" Do you approve of his advice, Sir?"

" As to the Bar, you mean? Quite so—if you
nk the necessary study for it would not be too
at confinement for your brave liberty notions."

" Any other profession I followed," replied Cler-
nt—" followed earnestly, and profitably, would
uire as much."

" Except the Church," said the Vicar.

" I do not feel the earnest inclination I think I
ght to feel for that," said Clermont.

" Wherefore, I do not press it," answered the

Vicar; "though it would have given you my dear Clermont, much joy and comfort, felt otherwise."

"I had some talk with my mother on evening about it; and the idea of the Bar see pleasing to her."

"If that be so," replied the Vicar, p "nothing will be wanting, my dear boy, good heart and steady persevering purpos own part; and, with these, and God's bless no reason why Walter Pemberton's paths should not lead to pleasantness and peace."

"My mind is made up, then, Sir," said C elatedly; "now that I know you so approve c

"Perfectly, my dear Clermont; if your gives her sanction. After the Church, nothing but the Bar well open to you. knows? I may yet live to see my pupil General, or First Baron of the Exchequer events, holding the position worthy of his g and lineage."

"I hope so, Sir," said Clermont, "And then," continued he, after walkin twenty paces on in silence, during which h gathering courage for the declaration of some thought, that would no longer brook impri and which, encouraged by the Vicar's affectio and manner, he was determined to out with

d yet the opportunity; "then, I hope, Sir, I may, hout presumption, claim at your hands the wning prize of my highest ambition?"

'Ah!" exclaimed the Vicar, "and what is that to my dear Clermont? Happy, indeed, should I feel, I thought it was reserved for me to minister in way, really and permanently, to your happiness."

'You can make it, Sir, or mar it for ever, by a rd," said Clermont.

"I do not affect to misunderstand you," replied the ar, cordially. "My daughter's hand is the prize allude to. First, let me ask—and I rely on r candour—is mine, Clermont, the only consent have to gain?"

"I had hoped, Sir," replied Clermont, a shade er of cheek, and with a slight tone of disappointnt in his voice, "for a more cheering promise than r words convey. If you mean, does Miss Law- smile on my suit; does she permit me to hope; our attachment mutual?—my heartfelt belief— I have never deceived you, Sir, and I never will is, that it is. I had flattered myself, Sir, that you ew it, and approved it; and such, I will venture to , has been Miss Lawton's impression, too—to om disguise, or clandestineness in any shape is known—as well as mine. Have I been mistaken, ?"

"No, Clermont," replied the Vicar, "not at all.

I must have been blind, indeed, had I not
perfectly well understood all you can have t
on that subject. And, seeing, and unde
it, my dear Clermont, I must have been le
good, and fond, and watchful father, had I
to continue, for a single day, what my
affection could not sanction. No, Clermo
not, so far, disapproved; or you would not
had the privilege to put the question to me.
so far, observed, and approved, I may say,
Clermont; but—"

"But! Oh! Sir, crush not thus at a
bright hopes that your words have just rai
heart," exclaimed Clermont, changing from
to a deadly paleness. "What would life a
expectations be worth to me without thos
Have I done ought to forfeit your esteem
know how truly and devotedly we love ea
Our attachment—not of a day, nor a mo
year; but of long, gradual growth—has take
grown up under your own eye, fostered and
we always fondly believed, by your paterna
and encouragement. Have I ever done
forfeit your esteem and approval? Is my
tion for the Church, as a profession, displeasin
If so, I will overcome it. Point out the c
would have me follow—only point it out, S
ask not for the prize, till I have fairly won
fect satisfaction."

'You misunderstand me," replied the Vicar, llingly. "I repeat, that I have nothing to dis- rove of. On the contrary, your conduct, Cler- nt, I am pleased to think, since you have been ler my charge, has been irreproachable. Your ther has no cause, either, of complaint that I know I don't think we ever had an angry word ether. Your attachment for Annie—and I love for it—has been no secret from me, nor from ır mother; but you are both so young—nay, don't e fright—and have grown up so long, as you say, ether, like brother and sister almost, under our s,—that anything beyond has hardly been a matter serious consideration, as yet, with either of us I cy. It becomes my duty, however, now, my dear ermont—after the declaration you have just made a duty I owe to you both,—to state clearly, and ce for all—and you will understand me,—that my nsent to your wishes, my dear Clermont, must pend, of course—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Clermont, agitatedly; "of urse, Sir—on my fair title to deserve it. I ask no ore, Sir. Tell me—only tell me, Sir—I may, when have acquired that title, claim my reward at your nds—I ask no more."

"Very well," said the Vicar, "we are agreed; nnie, of course, always being a consenting party to ıe contract. That is but fair?"

"Of course, of course!" cried Clerm
colour again rushing to his cheeks.

"I lay no restraint," continued the Vic
"and never will, on her free choice; further
proper parental care and solicitude for her
may dictate. You are both, as yet, very
inexperienced. How know you, that an ex
quaintance with the world—I have seen su
happen, with hearts seemingly devoted to
much as yours and Annie's, my dear Clerm
not, I say, work strange changes in your fe

"Never, Sir, never! Impossible!"
Clermont.

"That time will best prove," returned
"I can pledge myself no further. It rests,
yourselves, thus—with you, Clermont, to a
title, if you would possess the prize; and w
to accept it at your hands, or not, as she n
that must remain entirely with herself."

"I ask but that, Sir. It is all my hea
My happiness is to be the result of my fi
deserve it at Annie's hands,—that hand-
gift, Sir—my reward!"

"Good—just so," assented the Vicar.

"Do you approve, Sir, of Mr. Pemberto
travelling scheme, for twelvemonths?" a
mont, fetching a deep breath.

"Entirely! I think—used to good p

uld do great things for you. All depends, of
ırse, on that. Otherwise, foreign travel, at your
, does a great deal more harm than good."

" I wish Mr. Pemberton was inclined for a tour,
," said Clermont.

" That would be delightful for you, indeed!" re-
nded the Vicar. " Artists and authors are great
nblers. You should ask him."

" I thought of doing so, Sir; but there's the grand
f-d'œuvre for the Suffolk Street will stand in the
y, I'm afraid; and, then, there's Somerset House.
, my Cousin Cecil," said Clermont, a sudden idea
ming to strike him—" that's a good thought! He
es the continent, speaks French and Italian as well
English, and often talks of going again to Naples."

" I'm afraid that would hardly accord, though,
th Lady Fitzherbert's present wishes, Clermont,"
olied the Vicar, appealingly. " Your Cousin has
fetch up, you know, a good deal of lost time;
d we must set to work seriously, I think, after we
urn from Castlemore, at our Greek and Latin.
eady application till next summer will, I hope, give
, then, a good long holiday. But, I take it, we
ust not talk to Lady Fitzherbert about any more
nole holidays just at present, my dear Clermont."

" True, true," said Clermont. " I didn't think of
at. Otherwise, a trip together would have been so
easant, Sir."

"No doubt. I should think, though, the
be no difficulty at all, when you make up yo
—and there's no hurry—with such introdu
you would have, Clermont, in your finding s
friend, or family, going the same route—
slightest difficulty, I imagine. We'll talk
Fitzherbert about it on Thursday—there's no
hark!—ah! the bell for breakfast, wasn't
faith! I'm not at all sorry for it; for our st
mont, has given me quite an appetite this m

No less penetrating than Lancelot Law
the keen eye of Cecil Fitzherbert, to rea
bottom of Clermont Onslow and Annie's op
Lord Fitzherbert saw at a glance, after hi
Roxberry, how the case stood,—that, howev
might meet him always with the same swe
which from her very nature she could no m
doing than the sun to shed its genial rays on
all alike; however she might admire his pe
listen half-charmed to the music of his con
—her heart was with his cousin; and his,
eye could see, would undoubtedly remain, sp
his title and fascinations; wherefore took L
herbert, no less calmly and determinedly th
Lawton, his cue accordingly.

Cecil Fitzherbert's policy, its aim, and
monstrable by actions, not by words, the s
best explain. Meanwhile, impatience should

ccess. His whole conduct and bearing towards ousin should be faultless. Their mutual con- e should be unbounded. Nay, he would seem omote the wishes nearest Clermont's heart in way he could. All distrust should vanish, all sies be for ever at an end. Annie could not ee that he admired her. How much, in truth, olized her must remain for the present a secret whispered to himself. No woman was ever ed at the homage of man's respectful devotion rself. But Annie should have nothing to feel obligation to, or Clermont to take fright at. oils should be so fascinatingly fashioned, so cally laid, so temptingly baited, that his pretty should fly ere long for refuge to his arms, not msily scared away for want of clever handling; once caught and caged, she would know better to beat and buffet her tender breast about, and her pretty plumage, with such a gentle jailor to er plaintive ditties to as Cecil Fitzherbert.

ter breakfast, Clermont invited Cecil to his to hunt out some fishing tackle, as the wind ust in the right quarter for the mill-tail wager, ave a look over his guns and trolling rods; and, g him in a conversable humour, soon put him ossessions of his conversations with Walter erton and the Vicar, touching the counsellor's roposal and the foreign tour.

Cecil "coincided entirely, though it would
of one of his happiest boasts at Marksbury.
certainly, was all to nothing the finest stepp
to distinction, whether in the senate, or on t
He considered he was quite right—unless
embrace it conscientiously and earnestly-
deciding for the Church. Two thirds of t
took to it never felt, he believed, any prop
not the right call—not the call that they ou
what was the consequence?—best part of t
was in their white chokers and straight v
could tell him a capital thing or two ab
There was not a bit of credit in rising
offices in the church. Rank, and friends
did it all. Certain oratorical powers,—
the popular-chapel sort—that was quite ano
—a good voice, a commanding address, a
person, and not too tight a doctrine, th
captandum—were safe to gather crowded
tions.

Whenever you heard talk of 'The Nev
weren't you sure as a gun, his Right Rever
of a good stock? By George! yes—to e
fat things Mother Church had to bestow,
as much a proof of merit, in England, by
nine times out of ten, a Rear-Admiral's c
had in it, or a General's despatch. No, he
glad it was to be the Bar. There could b

there. Silver spoons in the mouth, birth, , station, association, sugared words, and satin s went no way with the attorneys; nothing of sort humbugged them.

ith regard to the tour, he heartily wished him The thought of it made his heart bound again. weren't for his mother, he'd make the Conti- his residence for the remainder of his life. He it! Directly he could get his mother in the , he'd go again to Naples. Italy was the land e in! No mere cold, cramped vegetating there, England—for ever under clouded skies and ess climate; but life—real life—something like beauteous—balmy—blissful—basking life! By ge! but for his mother, who had set her heart is reading with the Vicar for a twelvemonth, be off before another week. But he was afraid ust stick to it—at all events, for that winter; nen, by George! if he ever got his foot on the side of the Channel again, catch him coming to their blessed land of beef-steaks and black s in a hurry!"

rmont, in deference to the Vicar's charge, for- to say a word that could tend in the least to le his cousin at his studies, strict application me time to which, he knew was Lady Fitzher- chief object in sending him to the Parsonage; ell as to remove him into a healthier air for

body as well as mind. But Cecil had heard and gleaned enough of his cousin's thought which way the current flowed; and, treas every word in his remembrance, it was before his prolific brain had resolved to tu a channel should waft his precious venture little tact and talent, into the safe and pleasa he had in view for it.

The Bathurst gold-freak particularly hit l and deserved consideration. Wherefore, Lo herbert made very light of it, treating it as a whim, not bad at all for the spree of it, a he shouldn't object to in the least himself, ju the sort of life it was. There was one wherever he decided on going, his letters duction would be first-rate! That was a gre But he must make up his mind, before he to leave old England behind him for a ti would be happy. He might rest assured be just in the same place, and Marksbury, t he returned, as where he left them. He co him a few other hints of experience, too, w him on immensely. For instance—to set ou ever and wherever he went, with a determi be pleased; to be as little egotistical and self- —which for an Englishman was difficult- sible; to learn cheerfully and intimately was to be taught advantageously—and the

ast deal more, take his word for it, than Murray's Hand-books ever told of;—to acquire—and that as not difficult at all—a preference for good claret ver port and bottled-stout; and for courtesy and ivility to John Bull's precious honesty and egotism; ever falling into the vulgar error, that good manners a foreigner are all 'humbug'—which was a lament-ble mistake—or that he has any felonious design ith it on your purse; looking at things around you, you would enjoy them, as much as possible with ne optics of a native; deeming nothing, but dis-onour, too *infra dig.* for your British blood; French ookery—except, say, in roast beef and plum-pud-ings—admirable! something worth eating and rinking besides tough beef-steaks and muddy por-er; something worth seeing, too, besides the Na-ional Gallery and Cremorne Gardens; with a few ther little useful *memoranda* he had gleaned in his ravels, worth dotting down; and which they would alk of, put him in mind, another time."

Clermont lent an eager ear to his experienced ousin's counsels. A new life seemed to be opening, nd with brightest prospects, to his vision, and he ould have sat laughing and chatting there for hours; ut the day being just the thing, as Cecil reminded im, for the grey-palmer, and Walter Pemberton just n the humour, and Aunt Gerty and Annie having

settled it to bring luncheon over to them in
chair, and see what sport they had had,—
set the anglers in high key, to see which
the pair of worked slippers Aunt Gerty ha
as promised should be the prize for the
caught that day; and which Walter Pembe
not but grant, was "a prize to contend
have put Isaac Walton on his best metal,
all the dirty current coin, ten times over, of t

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SERPENT ON THE HEARTH.

RSDAY dawned at last; for Miss Rosalie, with-
om no Marksbury party was deemed complete,
the only one at the Parsonage who thought
a long time coming; and when she peeped,
-wise, through her curtain, and met the first
hearty smile of the herald of glad tidings to
besides herself and Annie Lawton, greeting
h sweetest promises through the little bower of
ves, clematis, and honeysuckles that canopied
indow:—

t a cloud, love, nor sign of one," she cried,
g her hands and waking up Annie from her
g dreams. "Oh, be joyful! then we'll wear
v mulberry-spots, won't we, darling?—Hunt-
fairing,—and they'll think we're sisters, when
to Castlemore?"

it settled how we are to go?" asked Annie,

sitting up in bed, and veiling her eyes with
from the sudden blaze of light, which, as, Ros
withdrawing the curtain, came full into her

"Oh, yes! all settled last night, darli
Rosalie, opening the wing of the wardrobe,
playing the two 'mulberry-spots' hanging
side;—"all quite settled, sweetest, and to ev
satisfaction, by Huntworth, love."

"It *must* be satisfactory then of course
Annie.

"Perfectly so, darling. There they were a
purposes—you should have heard them—t
worth came in, and made it all right in a
Thick as they call him, love—there's more in
finger, to settle a point, I can tell you—when
be settled—than some wiseacres have got
whole twice five."

"Comes to the point, does he?" asked A

"Do you know, I think I shall wear
coiffé en bandeau to-day, dear," said Rosali

"I thought Huntworth liked ringlets best
Annie; "don't he?"

"You silly little thing! Well, I was goi
you how they settled it. First, the Vicar
mother in Lucy Onslow's safe, sensible four
that won't turn over; Sam and Hannah, with
gage, in the rumble. Second, Mr. Walt
berton and Aunt Gerty, with the two mulb

, on their best behaviour, in the pony-chair.
his Lordship of Castlemore on Di; and his
Counsellor Onslow, on the Doctor's pie-bald,
body-guards against banditti over Thorney-
And last, love, but not least, you'll understand,
t Huntworth himself, on the old roan; our
well-beloved—to see us safe to Roxberry, and
ack glad tidings of our royal progress. Don't
l that very satisfactory?"
one respect only do I see that the picturesque
be improved," thought Annie.
ow so, love?"
uld the old roan but have carried a pillion,"
nnie, sitting down before her toilet, and letting
long luxuriant tresses till they almost swept
pet;—fancy, the fair Rosalie and her stalwart
orth, Darby and Joan like, jogging on cheek-
l together."
iavolo! as his Lordship says," cried Rosalie,
g her hands,—" that would be a sight for sore
Do you know, dearest—I had the oddest
last night. I know you laugh at dreams,
so, I'll tell you."
es, do," said Annie, brushing away at her
till her eyes shot fire.
Vell, I thought we were all at Castlemore,
g,"—sitting watching the moon rising as we
Hazelcombe, you know, the other night; when

all of a sudden, and nobody knew why
quarrel between Clermont and cousin Ce
about you, darling, you had nothing to d
so, don't fidget, pray, about that; but abou
it odd—Bella Gordon? Oh, the most
creature, dearest, you ever saw in your life!
saw such a face! Eyes black as sloes, and th
your very soul; the proud air and man
Countess; but such sweetness, such amiabil
enchanting *grace à ravir!* If the real Be
all, love, is only half as beautiful! you an
ling, must hide our diminished heads, and
you. Well, how it was I don't know; bu
moment, Lord Fitzherbert—though he was
you, love—not to Bella—that's the oddes
made a rush at Clermont. Now, don't fa
Bella ran screaming into the house, followe
two cousins. I can't tell—can't call to mi
exactly happened next.—All I remember
was a piercing shriek—it rings in my ear
moment—such a horrible shriek—it makes
cold even to think of it!—though I kno
all nothing but a dream. But law, how odd
Fitzherbert, holding Aunt Gerty tight by
and you, dear, by the other, sat, like a stat
ing on. I tried to call to her, but I cou
thought I got somehow to the door. Th
lay, stabbed and bleeding, on the step,

ousins plunged at each other over her body
heir naked swords; when, struggling to cry
ve—"

u awoke, I suppose," anticipated Annie,
tly indifferent, but sensible of the blood
her cheeks blanched for a moment,—" found
, I'll be bound, lying on your back—the
—you would do it—of that chicken salad
so much of—how I warned you—at the
last night,—and had been doing penance
folly. A very terrible piece of business, I
rn !"

will do to laugh at, won't it, when we get to
ore ?

tter say nothing about it," advised Annie,
Fitzherbert. " Lord Fitzherbert says she is
ous and fidgetty about dreams. I wonder
Bella *is* so very beautiful ?"

at love, we shall soon see now," replied Rosa-
ng on with her toilet. You look, darling,
e-half as charming as you did last night in
dy's eyes, I know; and you need not grudge
lla's captivations ?"

ook—*I* charming ?" exclaimed Annie, arrang-
front hair ;—" I ?—in whose eyes, Rosie, dear ?
know, I really think I must let Hannah cut
e of this back hair—I don't know what to do
,

"And I'd give a guinea for what you do
said Rosalie, pulling to pieces the tight
had somehow got entangled. "In w
darling? You havn't a notion, I suppose

"Yes, I have, Rosie dear."

"Oh! when we've got two strings to
laughed Rosalie; "we can afford to be so
pendent!"

"Two strings!" smiled Annie. "In
with only two? Many, Rosie dear, they sa
of it with more than double two. I'll tel
I wish;—that Lady Edith and Bella
to Marksbury, Rosie, instead of our
Castlemore."

"You do, darling? How ungrateful
And Lord Fitzherbert set his heart, he has,
your taste about the fresh paints, and pape
new furniture for the boudoir, and the pink
room, and the state bed-chamber; and I
what else besides."

"He ought to consult Lady Emma's t
those, Rosie dear."

"Perhaps she has none, darling; or
or leaves it all to him; or—for she's very
vanities of this life have no charm for he
tell you, dearest, then, what my opinion
entre nous, love—Lord Fitzherbert never
thought whether she has, or not."

ver gives it a thought?" repeated Annie. "I
t was a settled thing."
Lady Edith's mind, not at all unlikely; but
d Fitzherbert's and the Lady Emma's, one of
onvenient little matters, darling, will bear
off *sine die*, as your father says."
en, there's Bella Gordon," reminded Annie;
aste is ever correct—that Lord Fitzherbert
nself."
! but love—you forget the charm there is in a
velty. Bella's tastes are the counterpart in every
most of his own. No doubt, he has a fancy to see
tallies, dearest, just for a change, with those
es. Besides, Bella has enough, I suppose, to
f now—about the Belgrave house."
ell, I don't know why hardly," sighed Annie,
never think of Castlemore without a sort of
."
emble? Would I tremble, then, if a grand
'a real live Lord!' as Huntworth says,
me what sort of boudoir and bed-room
ld most like to have. What, in pity's name,
, is there to tremble at in that?"
is very silly, no doubt," smiled Annie. "No-
hatever in that, Rosie dear, if that were all."
ou think you could answer that, darling,
t a heart-throb *extra*?—true and devoted,
fond, faithful little Marksbury lassie, spite

of all the Castlemore's and Coronets in
dom—to Cousin Clermont and the C
Content?"

"I think I could, Rosie."

"It is not that makes you tremble, then

"Far from it, Rosie dear."

"Then, it must be this, love," proceede
after reaching down the two mulberry-s
laying them on the bed tenderly,—"there
sweetly pretty?—whenever you talk n
Castlemore, love,—don't you think, darli
Manning has matched the bands surprisingly
ever, love, you think now about Castlem
your father set his heart on Linwood,—
to be saying good-by for ever to dear old M
isn't that it, sweetest?"

"Very nearly, Rosie dear."

"For ever? No, no, darling, no suc
cried Rosalie, surveying herself from head
the Psyche. "Part from your Rosalie fo
for ever?—how can you say so, sweetest?
lovey—that would break your Rosie's hea
you don't think, darling, do you, Manning
the sleeve, too full?—they're wearing th
says. I like the style of the body ve
there's a fit! Do you know, dear, I'm
think, dear,—your father really would be
that is—more in his element—better ap

an—at least—I'm sure he thinks so himself—at
nwood, dear, than Marksbury."
"How better appreciated, Rosie?"
"His talents, I mean, love. Of course, I'm a
le soul worth saving, I know that; but who in
village, besides you and I, sweetest, and Clermont;
l Lucy Onslow, and Huntworth, when he don't
to sleep—for, thick as they call him, I can tell
u, Huntworth has a longer head, a pretty deal,
n people give him credit for,—understands ten
rds out of twenty of the learned sermons your
her preaches every Sunday? I know none of our
ople do, say what they like; except, may be, Ann,
d I can't conceive how she can, looking out the
ts as she does all the sermon; nor The Bury
ks,—'they're clean above 'em all,' as Huntworth
ys. No, love—we don't part for ever, mind that.
hat's a run across of sixteen miles when we want
go and see each other? Light enough Tom and
rry mean to make of it this morning, the darlings!
on't they look saucy in their new streamers? By
e bye, I've a bone to pick with Master Clermont.
e bought them all a new fairing, that he did, but
e. I can't tell what's come to him since the fair.
do think he's been out of his wits, ever since. *I*
n hardly get a smile, do what I will."
"You tease him so," reminded Annie; "how can
ou wonder at it?"

"But I tease you, too, don't I?" laughed
"and you don't mind it. No, no, that's no
Annie. He's jealous of the 'mulberry-spots
as fate."

"Of old Huntworth?" cried Annie,
"Oh, my patience!"

"See, when we go down, then, presently
retorted Rosalie, disdainfully, "if you doubt

"And you really think," smiled Annie, wit
sigh, "that papa *would* be happier at Linwo

"I think," replied Rosalie, buckling the '
match" round her waist, and taking a s
of herself with considerable satisfaction;—
love—it will be time enough to talk about t
the time comes. It may never come!
Don't let's anticipate the dismals. Do y
Annie, sweet, I prefer Manning's cut to
Violette's—for a muslin. Who'd have
Huntworth had such taste? It *is* sweet
isn't it? It may never come! darling.
know why—but I can't bring myself to thi
how, it ever will. And, if it should—
Worthington's just as likely to live five yea
or I. You mind now what I tell you—y
enough to be at Marksbury, sweetest—if you
Lady Annie—for five years yet to come, as I
Rosalie Bainbridge, spinster, worse luck for m
vided always—that is—unless, darling;—t

I live, he's here already, and we're not down yet!"
ed Rosalie, rushing to the window, as the old
agler's shrill whistle to Sancho rung cheerily on
ear. "There he is—good gracious—and so smart,
!—bent on killing somebody this morning;" and,
owing open the casement,—"Ah! good morning, if
not too late, you little lazy lie-a-bed!" cried Hunt-
rth, arranging a moss-bud he had just picked in
button-hole. "This is what you call gathering
morning roses, is it? I'm ashamed of you."
"Wait a moment," called Rosalie, "and we'll find
a deal prettier one than that! How is Mrs.
dney? Ah! you slipped out unobserved, I know,
h that fine bran-new coat and waistcoat on. Never
nd, they look beautiful!—And, Annie quite ready,"
wn tripped the 'mulberry-spots,' arm in arm, to
in the old Beagler's eyes with any the sweetest
e-buds all Hampshire had to boast of.
"Ah! and my two fairings, I declare!" cried
ntworth, winking delighted, as the spots came
pping into full view on the lawn before him.
"It would puzzle you now, wouldn't it," asked
salie, "to know which to choose?"
"Puzzle *me* which?" cried Huntworth, drawing in
s breath with a half whistle, and looking full at
nnie. "Don't want a second thought."
"It don't, don't it?" said Rosalie, with a toss:—

"Comme vous voulez, Monsieur le Comte;
J'ai un choix aussi bien que vous."

which, being interpreted, Monsieur—oh! blush, then, at your age, to be taught?—

"That is just as you please, Mr. Huntworth
Two can play at that game, 'faith! as well

"I should think so," laughed Clermon his appearance with Esther Lawton, wi basket-full of fresh-picked monster grapes Fitzherbert in his hand.

"I must have both, then, or none," laug worth, regarding the two pets with beamin

"If you have no objection," began Clerm

"Ah! Mr. Clermont," cried Rosalie; what have you to say for yourself?—wh pray, can you see between the two?—ah!-

"How happy could I be with either,
Were 'tother dear charmer away."

"That's it, Mr. Clermont, is it? Oh! of you!—not had the heart to wish us joy e new fairings."

"I am so struck with admiration," Clermont, "that I can, really, hardly find v

"Didn't I tell you so, darling?" whisper as the Vicar, Lord Cecil, Aunt Gerty, an Pemberton came chatting merrily up the "It's as plain, love, as old Sancho there jealous, dear, as a Turk! with all his compli

What a fever of interest and excitemen

ordinary events, however trivial, create in a
le out of the way, simple-minded nook like
arksbury, where the good folks are so in the
nstant habit of jogging on at the same even pace,
t any deviation from the one routine is an epoch
their existence to be canvassed, and chronicled, and
asured up, as long as there are ears to listen, and
ngues content to tell. Of course, the Vicar's in-
ded visit to Castlemore, which had transpired
roughout the village in less than an hour after he
d made up his mind about it with Mr. Jennings,
s, naturally, the one all-absorbing topic had kept
bitha Ludlam and all the other Marksbury gossips
fever-point for the last three days; and various and
citing, as may be supposed, were the conflicting
inions hazarded on one side or another on the all-
portant queries it gave rise to.

Scarcely had the first agitation of Lord Fitzher-
rt's arrival at the Vicarage, and then of Sam's and
's after him, then of Walter Pemberton's in a
easure subsided, when here was something else to
t the *quid-nuncs* in Tabitha's little parlour-back
th a vengeance at their wits'-ends. Something
as in the wind—something must be! Tabitha
udlam had had a dream as well as Miss Rosalie;
d, "mark her words!—something would come of it
fore that day twelvemonth, as sure as her name was
abitha Ludlam." Master Ghrimes, the chandler, was

as sure of it, as that "them was a pour
wasn't they, hanging on that nail? barring
he'd just pulled off for widow Collins."
Sharp, the ex-attorney-at-law—but who still
then, did a little friendly business when
mour, and he could see his way clear—"ha
tation in saying," in a confidential whisp
bitha's private ear, "that the Vicar was a
clever fellow! He should like to have the
the settlements amazingly for Lady Annie."
of wedding-dresses, and love-knots, and or
soms had been agitating Selina Manning's
and all her girls, for the last two nights.
in her mind's eye, Jane Bailey saw her lit
and passages of 'The Hen and Chickens
in evergreens and merrymakings, and Fra
in his spruce holiday best, playing havoc
tender heart, with that gigantic favour on
while Paul Whittingham, the schoolmaster
Horner's; and Ralph Champion, and Tobi
the clerk, waiting the next turn in Barb
"pitied poor Master Clermont from the
their hearts, that they did!" no less than a
and lasses in the village; old Mabel, by
lane, over her kettle, chiming in in chorus w

"The cuckoo comes with his pretty song,
Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo:
To hear him, you'd think he could do no w
He sings so loud, and he sings so long
His cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo."

Indeed, there seemed to be but one mind, from
bitha downwards, in the village; the only mystery
ing—how it was that Clermont, who was a party
rtainly to the full as much interested in matters as
y of them, should appear to be so blind to what
s "as plain as the noses on all their faces" to every
e else.

Clermont Onslow's devoted attachment to Annie
wton, betrothal to her for a long time past, we
y say, in the one eye of Marksbury, was patent
five miles round as the Vicar's pent-house brow,
rned sermons, or old 'Socrates,' his pony. Tabi-
a Ludlam and Selina Manning and Lizzy Horner,
d discussed it over many a gossip-dish of tea,
d decided almost on the selection of the *trousseau*.
was just as much a matter of course, to couple
ermont and Annie as Paul and Virginia in sweet
lowship together. It was one of those inevitables,
cognized and looked for as positively as the ringing
the Wednesday bells, or white dresses on Whit-
onday; a *fait accompli* in the estimation of every
e, quite as much so as a promise of Miss Ger-
ade's, or the housing of the harvest. But a
ange change had come over the spirit of their
eam since the arrival of Lord Fitzherbert.

Selina Manning "thought she had never seen such
perfect profile in her life as his Lordship's. It
minded her of that beautiful wax face of—what

was his name?—a great statesman's, she
Madame Tussaud's exhibition. She cou
the life of her, keep her eyes off it all ch
rivetted her! There was something ine
fine in the expression—something—she di
how exactly to express it—something fearf
nating! as you might say." Tabitha perfectl
she "couldn't, either, keep her eyes on he
book, do all she could. Though, still, for
part, she thought she preferred Mr.
Onslow's healthy, fresh, open, hearty l
that was all a matter of taste, wasn't i
wasn't quite sure—whether it was, then, su
thing to be Miss Annie! She, Tabitha Lud
her opinion."

Selina Manning "no less admired Mr.
than Tabitha Ludlam. He had such a go
rous heart! but wondered what Miss Annie
about it?"

Tabitha "knew very well what she should
it were her case, which it wasn't. Tim
shew. She could fancy in whose ears
Annie would jingle sweetest. She said no
Time would shew. But this she would
Vicar might go farther and fare worse than a
bury. She had no patience!"—and out flounc
tha from her little parlour-back, to tell Clar
for the fifth time, there was nothing for her.

had no patience! Some people couldn't look high enough. It was no business of her's; but she never knew any good come of your high, grand marriages. Look at 'The Grange,' then! All gold there and grandeur; and no more love—no more happiness than would go in the top of her thimble. It was dreadful! It made her teeth quite chatter to think of it. It wasn't what the children thought always, not it; or there'd be a sight more content in the world than there was. Look, now—there was the Vicar—she verily believed, between them, and it would go no further—would care no more for breaking that little dutiful, doating heart of his—to call her Lady Annie; than she would, to snip off that camelia-bud there—no—and not one half as much. *She* could see, if nobody else could—she wasn't blind, though she did wear spectacles sometimes. Tell her—who were walking and talking now, always arm in arm together? What was it now—but 'my Lord says this, and my Lord says that; and his Lordship must have this, and his Lordship must have that; this wasn't good enough for his Lordship, and that wasn't good enough;'—highty-tighty!—the ground wouldn't soon be good enough for them all to walk on. Poor lamb! It wasn't *her* fault—she was good, and humble, and homely enough, let her alone. Nor Miss Gertrude's—she knew better. Nor the mother's—nobody blamed her. As Mr. Jennings

said—' if ever any one was sure of a place in
Esther Lawton was ;'—no, it wasn't of her
not it. Mark her words !—poor dear lamb !
dreamt of her all Friday night—and Friday's
always came true,—mark her words ! they
let her rest, till they'd broken her heart o
and, then, she wished them joy of her *Ladyshi*
lambkin !"

Selina Manning " hoped and trusted her de
Tabitha's forbodings might be premature
Fitzherbert's attentions to Miss Annie migl
all, mightn't they, be nothing but mere nc
lantry ? Mr. Clermont—that was one thing
seem at all to mind them, did he ?"

" Tut, tut !—was Tabitha Ludlam blind ?
she wore specs—just to sort the letters—sh
see as far as other folks. She had no patien
people would—yes—and with both eyes
cherish a serpent in their bosom—between
they mustn't wonder if it stung them. Yes
her words—*stung* them ! Selina Manning
them some day, Selina—to the heart !"

" Paul Whittingham, dropping in, " saw
cisely in the same light," which he exempl
several apt Greek and Latin quotations fr
favorite *Latet Anguis in Herbâ* that he got th
theme-prize for when a boy at Roxberry G
School ; the precise nature and applicability o

he ladies, not perfectly understanding, applauded mmensely! "He had little more patience, faith! han Tabitha. He himself had known what it was. Of all things let them beware of 'the Serpent On The Hearth.' He only wished they understood Latin."

Selina Manning "fancied it must be a beautiful anguage! Supposed women would be taught it, f it wasn't so immoral. Had heard her brother say so, who was a Roxberry boy, and knew it at his ingers' ends."

Tabitha "couldn't see at all why what was good for men, shouldn't be good for women. Wasn't bread and meat and a glass of wholesome home-brewed good for both alike? One thing was clear enough—yes—the Snake On The Hearth. And, mark her words!—*'twould* sting 'em to the heart one of these days—yes—*sting* 'em—Selina Manning—*sting—sting*' em—to the heart!" And when, presently afterwards, the Parsonage party, having at last got off, passed with flying colours through the village—every door porch being crowded to wish them God-speed on their journey, and a safe return,—little thought Vicar Lawton, with all his discernment, of the disguises, and differences, and doubts, and discontents he was leaving behind him, in the precious fold which contained, what, in the pride of his pastoral heart, he was pleased to call "his united, happy little flock! not one black sheep among whom, not one,

he meant to tell Peter Worthington when
Castlemore, could he pick out if he tried."

In one respect, the Marksbury fold
certainly a united little flock. They w
universally enough in acknowledging the
learning, but in deploring, too, his pri
Tabitha Ludlam—who was a terrible fi
as well as gossip—had been heard more
to say, but in a whisper in Selina Mannin
to go any further—that, "for her part, sh
see the use of so much learning in a Priest.
it was, it puzzled more than edified her. If
her understanding—and she wasn't quite s
that—it didn't touch her heart. She though
the best sort of learning for a Priest,
straight home to the understandings of the
As far as a poor benighted sinner like she c
that was not the sort of knowledge, th
themselves on so much now-a-days, whi
taught His flock with; and, for her part,
believe there was any different way to be s
to what there was then. At least ways, sh
find it anywhere in her Bible; and till
she wouldn't believe there was. Just tell
the Saviour's knowledge—and it comprehe
suffered, and overcame all things—harden
and stiffen His neck? Did His learning—
was it that He did not know?—vaunt itsel

puff itself up? Wasn't it eyes to the blind; and a tongue to the dumb; and a crutch to the lame; and a lantern to the lost? Which did it shine forth for—the high and learned, or the lowly and ignorant? She had no patience! Was there any different way—answer her that—to be saved by His servants, than by the great Master Himself? She should like to know that."

CHAPTER XIV.

CASTLEMORE.

PERHAPS no event, since the death of the had caused so much pleasurable excitement, so many sanguine hopes in the breasts of th and tradesfolks of Castlemore, as the visi Fitzherbert and her ward, under such auspices as fresh arrivals from London ev parcels and packages held out, to the old f at the time we are recording. Beyond an run down for a few days, which she consider incumbent on her, especially should her Clermont Onslow decide for the Bar, and st day for the Borough, Lady Edith had ne her husband's death, delighted the good Linwood with her presence. Many times taken herself to task for a neglect whic son's account, had caused her many an twinge; and she determined "next sum

ıld positively go down and put in force the good
olutions, for his sake, which she had too long
wed one foolish fancy or another to continually
rfere with. But when "next summer" came,
ıe also the old excuses for the future day. "Her
lth required the sea breezes; St. Leonard's always
her so much good; Dr. Chambers would have
go to the sea; Castlemore was not bracing
ugh; and was so dull; and she was afraid of those
htful damps—Cecil had nearly caught his death
old there;—a good deal wanted doing to the house
make it comfortable; but thought she should fit
the boudoir a-fresh, and her bed-room and spend
nonth or two, for certain, "next summer. If
il liked it, it would be another thing; but, except
the shooting—the hunting was not worth talking
ut—he had often said he would never go near it.
l, it was her duty to keep up the right feeling
e and, by 'next summer,' the place might be
le, with a little taste and management she thought,
ıfortable enough;—and, then, go she would, and
ıing should prevent her."

Why Castlemore House had never been a favourite
Lady Fitzherbert's is not difficult to understand.
ides the extreme loneliness of its situation—stand-
about a mile and a half from Linwood, in what
ssrs. Brooks and Hedger would call "a noble
k," but what nineteen persons out of twenty

would think, though sufficiently well ti
particularly tame, uninteresting flat-expan
and pasture land, commanding no v
awakening, though hoary with the recoll
two centuries, no time-honoured associati
was not a feature, without or within, that
her affections.

Then, there was no other seat of any
within a radius of five miles. That w
drawback. Lady Edith's was a social
partial to the daily interchanges of friend
and at The Villa, or St. Leonard's she c
feel dull. Linwood, as a place, she detest
a rude, radical, independent little borough
on a hill, composed chiefly of cloth mills and
and doing a brisk trade in hides and wool
but with little sympathy, alas! for C
Castlemore. Still, it was a little town n
its pretensions on the map of England,
judge by the severe contests there had be
time or another, for the honour of repr
Not less than Ten Thousand was said to
spent on the last election; but a liberal
offering next time, would be sure, it wa
come in, with the Fitzherbert interest, with
many shillings. Wherefore, did Lady Edith
there was a talk of Clermont going to the
it an imperative *duty* on her part, that

onger be postponed, to expend some of her smiles, for the future, where they were so fairly due, and would, in all probability, be turned before long to so profitable an account; and, thus fortified, she and Bella set off in high spirits on their errand of duty, no less than of love and affection, from Hill Street.

During the earlier part of his life, the old Lord had usually, when not at Naples, spent some part of every autumn at Castlemore, principally for the shooting which he was very fond of, and the society of his old college tutor, Peter Worthington, whom he loved with an attachment that lasted to his grave, and richly merited Peter the confidence reposed in him by his pupil and noble patron; after which, Castlemore seldom saw him again till the next October. As the old place came to him, so he was quite satisfied, with little alterations or additions of any sort, to let it remain. He liked its antiquated cut just as must as the rooks did, or Bridget Crofts, his housekeeper; and, even after his marriage with Edith Hardwick, so satisfied with the elegancies of the Richmond Villa was she when in England, that Bridget Crofts and the rooks had it pretty much to themselves and after their own fashion; and so it had continued, with little interruption, *in statu quo*, till, Lady Edith and Miss Bella arriving in good earnest with their parcels and packages, the first glimmerings of a new reign began to dawn on Bridget Croft's awakening understanding;

and no less sensible, that something nearly
their interests also was in the wind, see
clamorous little colony of sable retainers
judge by the hubbub they kicked up, cawi
noisy welcomes from the elm-tops.

There certainly was an air about everyt
Castlemore, within and without, that seeme
tient of disturbance. The spirit of lonelin
melancholy hovered over it, jealous, se
of any intrusion on its privacy. The ol
who hobbled out of her gothic-lodge, to o
gates, eyed you with a searching scruti
boded little cheering for your further progr
long tortuous avenue of gigantic black pi
escorted you to the house, served in no
diminish the force of first impressions; y
your breath as you cleared the drive, and the
structure, big enough, with its double wi
of all proportion, and its capacious wandering
to lodge a troop of horse, stood before you. T
enough brick work in its cumbrous old
and crooked giant chimney stacks to have alm
the pretty Richmond Villa. Nor did you fe
more at home, when, in answer to your summ
pinched, pointed, petulant visage of Bridget
or the little, sharp, grey, twinkling eyes and
nose of Arnold Webster, with half open d
cautious glance, responded warily to your gre

Nor was there much more to cheer you in the ıside than the out. Your first impression when ou entered the hall, after the chilly feeling had gone ff, was one of surprise, that such a large lordly lace should be kept up for Master Arnold Webster nd Mrs. Bridget Crofts; for, call when you would, ou never saw mortal faces there but theirs; or dam Roots, or the butcher's boy and his pony's. our next, on passing through the rooms, that the rniture was not made for daily use; that, if you anted ever so, there was not a fit chair to sit down ı, unless in the kitchen, or Bridget Crofts' own *nctum;* that, in fact, the chairs and tables and eds were not accustomed to society, nor did they eem to wish to be. You felt, to get in one of those ately beds, with any idea of sleep, would be about s farcical a notion, as looking for a mutton chop r rump steak and mashed potatoes out of that ıonster polished range there, big enough to roast ı ox; or a single social glass from that glutted ellar of a hundred bins. There was not the spark f a feeling of home about it; and no wonder, with er social tastes and love of comfort, that Lady itzherbert felt more in her element a great deal ı Hill Street, or in her bijou of a Villa on the banks f Father Thames.

But, wanting in attraction for Lady Fitzherbert s was Castlemore in every feature but the gardens

and pleasure grounds, which, having alwa
sort of hobby of the old Lord's, were
up with some degree of pride,—perhaps
as anything that had given her a distaste fo
she could never overcome, was rather an
attached to it, and which unfortunately w
in all its main points not to be remembe
the many other mysterious stories told o
time or another; but most of which,
owed their origin to the mere love of the
and of gossip.

It seems, that some years before his ma
Edith Hardwick, Lord Fitzherbert had br
him from Naples an Italian valet, named L
attached to him from long service, and, in
for many kindnesses received, his constant
and factotum, go where he would. Bridget
a niece of very prepossessing appearance,
graces of mind as well as of person very un
young women of her humble class, who,
first arrival at Castlemore, was a sort of
maid there, and assistant to her aunt in
ways. Loto fell passionately in love w
Crofts; for some time disguised it as
ardent temper would allow, till, unable
contend with the flame that was devouring
moment of delirious infatuation, in the t
hope, he avowed it—was refused—and n

s seen to wear a smile. Time passed. Loto went th his master again to Naples—returned,—and ll Agnes Crofts was single—and no less pre- us in his eyes than ever. In despair, Loto un- somed all his secret to his Lord. His Lord could e him no hope. Some said 'that knowing his ssionate and jealous disposition, Lord Fitzherbert approved of the match, thinking the girl would not happy;' others, 'that he regarded her with too ap- ving eyes himself, to present her to another;' while a few laid it to the aunt; who "would rather fol- her to the grave!" she said, "than see her the wife any but an Englishman." Still, however, sighed in ret Loto; and still continued Agnes—without unding his self-love more than she could help, for was handsome and interesting, and ever kind and entive to her was Loto—to escape as well as she ld, from his ceaseless persecutions. One day they re alone together; and Loto, seeing her smile on n for some little act of kindness done, took cou- ge, and again let loose his heart. Agnes could give n no hope.

"You love another. Yes, yes," cried Loto, his trous black eyes flashing fire, and his lips quivering h passion,—"that is it—yes—you love another— love—you love another! It is that—it is that— d brother Carlo—no, no—will never see sister Ag- s at Palermo. You hate me—yes—you hate me!"

"Why will you pain us both, Loto, in returned Agnes—"why make me so unh how can I feel happy, while I know I am t wretchedness to you? You, who are alw to me, and thoughtful, and obliging—why No, no—you know I do not! I hat —much less you, Loto. My friends are They regard you, but they will not let They esteem you—every one esteems yo does my Lord. Why will you not underst

"I do—I do!" gasped Loto, pale as suddenly seizing the girl's wrist in his gras is it—I say you love—I say you love!—y —you love—I understand—"

But the creaking of Bridget Crofts' sho causing Loto to release his hold, poor away—unfortunately for her—before her make her appearance on the stage.

Straightway going to his Lord, Loto letter in his hand, and with perturbed face, mission for three days holiday—to go to attend the funeral of a friend. It was i granted. Loto was gone. About midnig night following, came a piercing scream fr bed-chamber in the western gallery—a room remote from the other servants' dormitories, had been assigned to her use by her aun nearer to her own, especially as Loto's at

r niece, of late, had seemed to Bridget Crofts to
mand increasing caution. A scene of uproar and
rror and consternation ensued it boots not here to
particular in relating—a scene can never be blotted
m Castlemore-memory as long as there is one
ck of it left standing on another. Agnes Crofts
s found stabbed in the neck and heart—a corpse !
en Bridget, staggering appalled to her bed side,
swooning over the murdered body of her niece.
But who was the murderer ? and whither had he
wn ?
Loto had left the House the day before ;—how,
ld it be he ?
Not an article of any description was missing.
eft, therefore, could not have been the motive.—
ho could the murderer be ?
When they ran to tell the tragic tidings to their
rd, he was sleeping soundly. Unbounded were his
ef and rage ! Henceforth, Castlemore would never
ve another charm for him. He would track the
assin to the world's end. Poor Agnes ! Justice
uld be done her, if it cost him half his fortune !
Not an enemy anywhere had Agnes in the world.
ho could the murderer be ?
Not a lock was undone—not a bolt withdrawn—
a door ajar ;—how then, could he have got in ; or,
re mysterious still, how possibly got out ? True,
re was a closet-window at the extremity of the
stern gallery, half open ; and sharp eyes thought

they could discern marks of hasty flig
brickwork underneath; and a rope migh
have been used to facilitate escape; a
rumours were heard of a figure, about Lo
and muffled in a cloak, as well as the
would permit of its being seen, having bee
skulking about the home park;—but thes
mere rumours on which no absolute reliane
placed. The closet window was often left
the marks on the brickwork might have b
by the high wind that night tearing th
from their holdfasts. Who could the mu

The coroner found his verdict—"Mu
some person, or persons, unknown."

Loto never returned; nor were any cer
ever discovered of him afterwards. But
doling lines addressed to Mrs. Bridget Cr
own hand, with much feeling and propri
pression on the melancholy fate of her niece
had put the climax to his wretchedness,
dered it utterly impossible for him ever aga
on the scenes in which all his heart an
wishes had been centred,"—left no doubt b
had quitted England;—and, to this day,
those who, when Agnes Crofts' murder in
of remark—persist in hinting at more than
—and to our thinking with most preposter
tice—that will have to answer at the day of
for that atrocious act.

Agnes Crofts was buried handsomely at Lord
tzherbert's expense, and an annuity of fifty pounds
tled on her parents. A suitable tablet in Linwood
urchyard was also erected by him to her memory;
d, they say, he "never heard her name mentioned
erwards, but his eyes glistened—perhaps at the
ought, that all his endeavours had been unavailing
avenge her death."

Of course, the scene of Agnes Crofts' tragedy was
r afterwards the haunted room at Castlemore; and
ugh Lady Fitzherbert, since her Lord's death, had
ie her best to blot out the 'damned spot,' by re-
delling and re-painting and papering, and other-
e making it as unghostlike as was possible, it is
easier to acquire a bad fame than to get rid of it;
l poor Lady Fitzherbert might have as well at-
npted to make black white, to purge Governmental
nopolies and corruptions of their abuses, or to
ify Father Thames, as to wipe away from the Agnes'
lery, as it was called, the evil stigma that attached to
Affect, as she might, to be indifferent to the super-
ural tales they told about it, there is little doubt
t Lady Fitzherbert thought more of the Agnes'
gedy than she chose to confess, whenever duty
w her to Castlemore. She had admitted to
rton twenty times, that she could get no sleep
it; and not all Bella's affectionate persuasions, nor
gent Harvey's suggestions on the score of policy,
uld, probably, have been sufficient to prevent

another put off till next summer, but fo
sistible maternal longing at her heart on
embrace her darling boy—as if she hadn
for five years—to judge with her own eyes
was as much improved in health as he sai
to have his opinion respecting the alteratio
provements she contemplated; and last, bu
to judge for herself, how far Annie Lawto
might be, in reality, an eclipse for Emma
ley's. Wherefore, dismissing from her
thought but the one all-absorbing one, th
going to press her beloved child so soon ag
heart,—Lady Edith met Bridget Crofts' a
Webster's obsequious welcomes with su
smiles, such very gracious compliments!
Arnold's little, grey, peering eyes twink
with positive delight, and, getting his nos
right focus, that genial feature responded w
quite comforting to behold; while Bridget'
petulant visage relaxed to such an extent, t
Roots, the head gardener, had to look twic
could believe his senses; and which pleasin
running like magic all over the place—wha
source of wonder and excitement, or anoth
more Hall exhibited a scene of bustle and
even made the rooks caw again right-o
chorus, and sent Harry Block, the butcher
loping back, like mad, to Linwood to tell th

CHAPTER XV.

CASTLEMORE.

"THERE then!" suddenly exclaimed Esther Law-
n, after a brown study of some ten minutes,
ring which the Vicar—proceeding calmly at his
ual steady pace, which had brought them after a
licious ride to within two miles of Linwood—was
apped in his own reflections; "there then!"

"What?" asked the Vicar, knowing by experience
t Mrs. Lawton's "there thens" were usually
eparatory to the declaration of something im-
tant omitted, or to something no less pressing
t had to be done.

"Then, there—if I haven't forgotten the quinine-
xture!" said Esther, casting a half reproachful
e glance at Hannah behind her, and laying her
nd on the cuff of her husband's arm that held
e reins, as if, though within sight almost of the
mney-pots of their destination, she was in two
nds whether to turn back or not.

"Well, what then?" said the Vicar, 'Strawberry' gently with the crop of the wh

"Isn't it most provoking?" exclaimed Es

"I make no doubt," replied the Vicar, "(Fitzherbert has a bottle of Port-wine in th more cellars. They were always reputed t differently well supplied by Barnes."

"Poh!" cried Esther, impatiently, "I wo given, that I would, a pound out of my pock than it should have happened! and" turni round on Hannah,—"where could your e been, you blind goose! not to have seen t on the sideboard? I put it there, now I re the last thing, not to forget it. What cou been thinking of?"

"Too many things at once, perhaps," s the Vicar. "Not an uncommon consequen of plenty of time to spare, yet, of hurry at l

"What's to be done?" asked Esther.

"Bear the penalty now," advised the Vica becoming patience, and take better care next

"And Lady Edith set her heart on it," Esther.

"You can mix them a bucketful when there," consoled the Vicar. "You have th I'll warrant, in your pocket."

"Is there no way," be-thought Esther, "c it across?"

n offered his services. "If my Lord would
n have Di, he'd be bound to be there and back,
and all, by breakfast time next day."
there was no Port wine at Castlemore, nor
cary's shop at Linwood, so he should," agreed
car; which in a measure comforting Mrs. Law-
ith the exception of an occasional ejaculation of
unfortunate!" and "she would have given a
out of her pocket rather than it should have hap-
" and "what a blind goose Hannah must have
ot to have seen what was standing large as life
her eyes!" she reconciled herself as well as she
to the thought of Lady Fitzherbert's disap-
ent; and, "Strawberry" putting his shoulder
l earnest to the collar,—her sufferings were, for
sent, brought to a close by the commanding
f Castlemore Hall coming suddenly into view;
oment after which Lord Fitzherbert, cantering
Barbara Cox came hobbling out fast as legs
carry her to the gate, put a stop to all further
lections and regrets, by welcoming them in
nivalric style to his ancient house.
owing close after, came Tom and Jerry, as
and "oudacious," as Sam called them, as if
ad only taken their usual constitutional morn-
eathing to Fernleigh and back; Walter Pem-
—in spite of Miss Rosalie's faint screams and
ded holdings to the basket-rail for the first five

miles, every time they came near a dit
established his reputation for ever as
Jehu; Clermont, meanwhile, performing
horsemanship on the Doctor's piebald,
the utter astonishment of that sagacious b
and "which" Huntworth Lowndes, ridi
up to the mulberry-spots as he could
times whispered in Annie's ear—"thre
and his Lordship quite into the shade, it

And, now, may best be left to imag
happy meeting of Lady Fitzherbert and h
guests that day. Such scenes are mad
many indescribable little features and eff
mixture of thoughts, and feelings, and
ejaculations, and half-uttered hopes, and
anticipations, and congratulations, suc
groupings of the eager mind with such
"keepings" of the glowing heart, tha
score they may be better conceived a gre
depicted. What description could conv
quate idea of Lady Fitzherbert's "deliciou
of emotions, as Esther called them, that ha
of the rapturous greetings, the heartfelt
the loving embraces of the doting mot
darling son; the fond reunion of the fo
and the foster-sister, as they always
other; the Vicar's paternal smiles an
countenance; Esther's mingled sensation

she had made a clean breast of it about the bottle—of delight and pride; Aunt Gerty's joy and exhaustless flow of spirits; Annie's ss complete, notwithstanding her misgivings; s madcap *abandon*, as if she had not just eave of her beau, and there were no such on as Mrs. Rodney in existence; Walter ton's perfect delight and content, as ex- by every look and word, with all the world erything it offered him; especially, at that , with Lady Fitzherbert and Miss Bella, no ces, indeed, from whom, of their joy at making uaintance were wanting—no, not a word— ok and word speaking out too eloquently, too y a great deal for misconstruction; and of nt's unbounded admiration of everybody and ng that met his gaze?—It must be left to ler's comprehensive ken, to take it all in at a a far more likely chance of doing justice to it ny, the very best sketch of it this poor pen power of portraying.

now the *brunette* and the *blonde* were face and arm in arm, and already heart in heart, ng each other with eyes, and thoughts, and ns unutterable! but easy enough of interpreta- those who understand what intense interest is in woman's breast by the reputation of great eauty;—nothing can approach it.

To have looked on Annie Lawton
evening,—as, forming as charming a
Castlemore's velvet lawn as Watteau ev
the little circle of gentle and loving heart
seats, *al fresco*, beneath one of Adam Ro
rose and jasmine bowers, to more thoro
the delicious coolness of the evening br
not acknowledged she was beautiful,
beautiful for a *blonde!*" as Lady Fitzhe
than once whispered in Esther Lawton's
have been impossible. To have looked, t
Gordon, felt the fire of those lustrous eye
tivating sweetness of that witching mou
thrilling music of those touching tones,
too full heart, no longer able to stem
with which it was bursting, could contai
more, but gushed forth in looks and lan
sistible—and not acknowledged she, "f
nette," as Walter Pemberton emphatically
several times under his breath to Aunt G
a model!" would have been equally impra

It would have been difficult to have
by side two more perfect models of fema
regarding them with any eye, yet, two
plete contrasts in every respect, than Anni
and Bella Gordon. Had either been a th
perfect than she was, never would such
eye as Walter Pemberton's have found it

wer Aunt Gerty's repeated queries and cross-
nings; nor Cecil Fitzherbert, the fastidious
sseur in female charms that he was, confessed
power of two such opposite divinities to hold
t one and the same time, their equally devoted
pper. He turned from the perfections of the
nly to be reminded of the perfections of the
Both were so beautiful, yet both so different!
ere so simple, so natural, and, yet, such total
tes! The very extreme contrast added lustre
ir loveliness. Side by side they reflected re-
d beauty on each other. The light owned its
obligations, without one ray lost, to the shade;
less with impunity rejoiced the pensive shade
ndebted to the light. How could there be a
y between them?

l Lady Fitzherbert, the centre of that loving
ircle, looked on at Esther Lawton's side that
day with beaming eyes and bounding heart,
she retold, for Esther's ever ready ear, many a
irring tale of bygone times—times, O how
ding more than ever at that moment in a
nd blissful recollections! — "when first, a
, adored wife! she came with Lord Fitzherbert
stlemore; and how he would have *her* taste
ed in everything—and the old place re-
ed, and re-decorated, and re-furnished, if she
it; but how, knowing his love for the

memory of the past, and old associations not suffer a brick to be removed, nor chair, nor picture, nor cabinet to be dis how, though he affected to be disappo regard to her wishes, his eyes, in truth, his heart, his noble heart! warmed towa if possible, greater love and acknowled ever.

And, when he would have it that she at Castlemore—how he bought her th Villa, and had the grounds and garden Henderson; and Dowbiggin to furnish an *bijou* of its kind; and of the days of l spent with him there; and of their life i Paris; and how he used often to declare, of true happiness dated from the hour he the Court ball there—the only true, una ness his wealth had ever purchased hin happy she was, too, always—yes, happy was long! And, then—how more an his father Cecil was growing every day— so forcibly when he came cantering up t park, that she turned for a moment—she it—as "cold as marble!" and Lady E eye, taking a jump back of two-and-t —again saw itself the beautiful young her first and last born on her lap, singing bies, and counting her laughing cherub b

s. "Oh, what a lovely babe he was! Eyes never earthly being so angelic! As he lay on her lap, ly sleeping, or laughing up in her face, who could ve that he was mortal? And, when illness came r he was always delicate—what her sufferings what words could ever tell? It made her shud- hen—even at that long lapse of time—to think of How she watched for six whole night's by his side, and wearied Heaven with her prayers. , how she thought he never would wake to smile her more; and then, how she was like a mad an! till his eyes opened again, and she saw them king to her, and his little arms stretched out taken to her bosom; and, oh! what her joy at that moment, who but a mother could ever rstand? For a long time she feared she could rear him; and, but for the warm climate of she was sure she never should have. She owed to Naples; more, oh, how much more than ould ever be sufficiently thankful for!"

But don't you think," mildly interrupted er, as Lady Fitzherbert's eyes fondly followed forms of her darling boy and Annie and Bella, Rosalie's winding through the walks, while t Gerty and the Vicar and Walter Pemberton Clermont held, with Adam Roots, sage counsel, d a bed of prize geraniums,—"don't you think as already picked up surprizingly at Marksbury?"

"Surprisingly! dear. I was saying so
I am so grateful, too, to think that he too
You are such good, careful housekeepers a
sonage. I have always had such a drea
beds since he got that illness the autumn
and that I attribute entirely to Croft's negl
say what she will. You made a miraculo
the sprained arm. Vaughan said you woul
well as if I sent Brodie down. You must
by the bye, to give me the receipt for the c
as well as the quinine. You deserve a pat

Esther's eyes sparkled. "It was astonis
that whey-posset had done!—and which
vouch for—when every thing else had faile
was the Vicar—"

"Yes, dear," remembered Lady Fitzherb
laying her hand on Esther's knee, while
forward a little to call to Adam Roots to
Vicar his new pine plants—"I know, de
wonders for him—Cecil told me. Nobody
you, can tell the comfort it is to me, dea
when I lay my head on my pillow at night
darling boy is in such good, kind, safe, sensi
I should call him boy, I do think, if he w
as his father. You will say I am very sel
always talking so of my own feelings; but
fondness and anxieties do make her, don't
an egotist?"

Don't I know very well what a mother's feelings
returned Esther, meeting Lady Fitzherbert's
ling look with a sweet smile of sympathy. "I
to know."

You ought. No one better, dear, I'm sure,"
Lady Fitzherbert, watching for Cecil's re-
ring figure through the shrubs.

Yes, I ought to know, if anybody does," pro-
Esther, seeing Lady Fitzherbert seemed to
; "for who has gone through more troubles and
ies, I may truly say, for her loved ones, than
I? God be thanked! though it has pleased
o smite me. Perhaps, in my pride and mother's
worshipped the creature more, in heart, than
reator; and for that it seemed good to Him to
n me. God be thanked! my burden has been
avier than, with patience, I could bear. Though
ook from me my boy—my first-born—my
lot—my—"

You have not been without comfort, dear. No
t is true. You have much to be thanked for;"
Lady Fitzherbert, pressing the back of Esther's
with two fingers, as the tears filled her eyes.
—yes, dear—you have, indeed, borne your burden
ly. Yes, and have been rewarded—richly—abun-
y rewarded," and Lady Fitzherbert's voice faltered.

Oh! yes I have—I have," owned Esther—"I
it—I am sure of it—I should be an ungrateful

wretch if I did not acknowledge it. Ann
good, affectionate child, a better cannot
He has been very merciful, and bountiful
nine long weeks—"

"Nay, nay," said Lady Fitzherbert, af
as again the tear drops trickled down Estl
"we must not recall a thought to-day to
joy. We have, indeed, both much to
for!"

"I *am* grateful—very grateful!" said
ing her tears; "but the spirit, with the s
weak—very weak—come to touch that cl

"What greater comfort could parent's
for, dear, than child like your Annie?"

"None, none! she is all our hearts co
better child can't be—impossible! And
her much improved?"

"The loveliest creature, dear, I ever
life!—for a *blonde*. You know I don't fl
I'm sure—good as beautiful—that you n
me. I see but one thing wanting."

"Ah! that is what her father often
cipated Esther; "you mean—more kn
society—a little more polish? I'm afraid
gauche, poor girl!"

"A season, dear, in London; yes—tha
mean. You can't think the wonders it w
her! I was just the same, as most count

r age, till I got a chance at my Aunt Alice
wick's, in Brook Street; and that, dear—it's
shing what it did—sent me home quite a little
ess! You remember Alice Hardwick? No,
e bye, she must have been some ten years be-
your time. The Vicar is quite right. She
come to me, that's a promise, after Christmas."
f her father can spare her," sighed Esther;
—"

Not a but, dear, in the case. It's all settled. He
od as promised me just now. I shall fix him
e we part. And Annie has set her heart on it, I
ll you."

ther smiled.

dy Edith had said enough, she saw, for the
ent; and, Cecil's form coming into fuller view,
at a pleasure it is to me," she continued, "to see
o happy, so settled at the Parsonage! I was
l, when Vaughan first proposed it, it would be a
dull at first for him; but I never saw him so
And Clermont, too—what a handsome, noble-
ng fellow he has grown—the image of his
r—I'm quite proud of him!"

As like as two peas," agreed Esther.

And in what high terms his mother speaks of
How delightful it is, isn't it, to hear a mother
so of her son? And he deserves it, I'm sure.
he made up his mind to go to the Bar?"

"We think so."

"Well, if he don't like the Church, as he couldn't, perhaps, do better. The s never do for him—too tender a heart a No—the Bar's the best. And, *entre nous* be his own fault if he don't come in so the Borough. The Major was a bit of a l heart, and he's his father's counterpart in And Annie?—ah! do you suppose I cann

"Don't talk of it," sighed Esther. "I turn quite cold to think of it. Though a b man don't live than Clermont Onslow; whom I would rather entrust—and that's happiness of child of mine; but—"

"The idea of parting with her—I can q stand, dear—strikes cold to your heart, no if it be for her happiness—that is everythin sacrifices"—and Lady Edith sighed deepl sacrifices will not a parent make for the her child? Ah! yes—how often has thought struck cold to *my* heart too, dear! must outweigh all other considerations, m That, dear, is a sacrifice we must, as par submit to—sooner, or later—and ought to as a duty, a glad duty—if we will only look as we ought. Still, it is, I know, a hard on hard one! when the time comes. For my no new task to me, dear, the lesson of self

help me! I know I'm very far from being per-
But I pray, dear, to be supported. And I am
I *shall* be supported—that is my comfort."
And what are the strongest of us but as reeds
ne wind," said Esther, "without that support?
I know, that I have felt the insufficiency of
arm but *One*, in my hour of need."
What indeed, dear? Cecil says Marksbury is
eet place! It must be by his description. But
paints so beautifully! Let me see—I passed
gh it once on my way to Fernleigh for a night.
emed a pretty country by twilight. Must be
, though, rather, I should think—with so
h water, and so many trees and hanging woods
t it, isn't it?"
Damp? Oh, no, not in the least! I don't
there's been a case of real ague, then," recol-
d Esther—after considering a moment to be quite
—" no, not a case—for five years—since they
ed the mill-fields; except, yes, by the bye, that
of the Vicar's, poor man!—and that was only
standing in that snow-storm at Betsy Gibbs's
ral that bitter cold day."
Yes, yes, I remember, dear—yes, you told me,
ou did—there had not been an instance of
e rheumatic fever for more than twenty years.
speaks volumes, dear—it does indeed! But,
ake doubly sure—prevention is so much better,

dear, isn't it, than the cleverest cure?-
told you, I suppose, of the famous sto
flannels and merinos we've set him up
winter? And the opodeldoc's as good a
don't you think so, for a common en
Yes, I was sure, dear, you would agre
The Vicar prefers Linwood, doesn't he,
bury?"

"We have sometimes thought so,"
ther. "That is—for some things—
But, coming through it to-day, he
quite so warm as usual in its praises.
know, he talks so little. He said it
busy, thriving little town; and something
Bishops; and a seat in Parliament. But
I can tell you, to know that Peter Worthi
come to Marksbury for the 'Cuyps.'
stand what the 'Cuyps' mean, I suppose

"Oh, yes, Cecil has told us all about
the 'Gainsboroughs;' and the 'Copley
How odd—their meeting at Braybrook,
He's a charming person, Walter Pembert

"We all like him so much!" respon
"We can't bear the thought of parting
He has taken the Vicar, and 'Socrates,'
Oh, the very image of them!" Cecil sa
'Wouverman's.' Do you know, betwee
I'm sure—and so is Gerty—the 'Cuyp'

rms, since he had somebody to look at it, and
e it, and talk about it with him. I don't know
I've seen him happier for a long time than he
een the last ten days."

thought, dear, he looked particularly well to-
fter his ride. The sweet congenial conversings
at minds are among the few really exquisite
of this life, dear, don't you think so?—that,
than anything—when really heartfelt—make
t, whatever it may be, a blessing!"

am sure of it," replied Esther, earnestly. "I
known times, and many, poor weak soul that I
when, vexed and troubled, I think my heart
have rebelled against God, or burst, if I had
ad a congenial bosom to go and pour my sor-
into; and, then, they were all gone, may be, in a
ent; or, if not quite that,—I felt, then, I could
borne, if it pleased Him, ten times their weight
ut repining."

Exactly, dear, what I have felt myself a hundred
! I do think, if it had not oftentimes been for
esource, with my nervous, sensitive nature, dear,
eart must have broken many a time."

should have thought," said Esther, simply, "that
s had been a life—as far as life can be—without
e—or pretty well should have been."

do not wonder at your thinking so," sighed
Edith. "But it is not to be as we wish it; or

may suppose we deserve it; or may appea
dear, in this life. I have much to la
to my own charge—yes, I know it—
should be sinful in the extreme if I did
But God's will be done! If it pleases
us; it is our duty, as you say, dear, t
patiently, cheerfully, dear, submit. I h
not altogether been ungrateful. I have
given me, that I know; and of that
render the account some day. Some thi
done, I trust, and done for the best. Bu
is not to the strong, nor the race, dear,
What we often sow in joy, alas! how oft
sorrow. But this we know, dear—we k

"That the seed will, hereafter, bear it
and no other," agreed Esther. "Yes,
great comfort as well as our condemn
know that 'He giveth it a body as it l
Him; and to every seed its own body,' a
As we sow, so shall we reap alone. W
His will, alone, when we happily reap His

"True, true, dear," sighed Lady
rising, and drawing a magnificent
embroidered-shawl over her shoulders t
had brought her, as the Vicar and Aun
Walter Pemberton made their re-appea
the pinery,—"that, indeed, *is* our comf
well Gertrude Lawton wears, don't she

pretty dress she has on; and made, was it, at
bury? She looks handsomer and happier, I
, than ever. And the portrait—a facsimile?
ell—time will shew. We shall see if I'm not
Aunt Gerty an old maid? Rubbish, dear!
now—does it seem at this moment at all
And Rosalie Bainbridge, so, she's to be Mrs.
orth Lowndes? My patience! there'll be fine
at Marksbury one of these days. Ah! what
dear boys and girls about there now?" and,
ng to recollect herself as she fastened her
with a pair of monster enamelled-gold pins,
go in now, dear—it's getting quite chilly—
l tell you all about Emma Sommersley, as I
ed you. What can the dear boys be about
with the rope under the trees, I wonder?"
ly some gymnastic feat they are going to
h the girls with," replied the Vicar, coming
of admiration of Adam Roots and his cata-
of prizes. "I thought we were making great
at Marksbury; but must put Humphrey a
nore on his metal, still. Chilly, rather, isn't
ou do right to assume your shawl."
ey'll be following us presently, I suppose," said
itzherbert, looking towards the trees. "I'm
so afraid of the night dews. And the girls
e thin muslins only."
! they're used to be out and about at all

hours, early and late," said Esther; "
a bit of fear!"

"Ah! the light hearts and buoyant spi
are such a fortification," sighed Lady
turning towards the house. "When I w
I know the day was never long enough fo

"Would you live the days gone by ov
you could?" asked the Vicar.

Lady Fitzherbert sighed deeper than
hardly know," said she. "Would you, d

"For the pleasurable—no, certainly
woman as I have been," replied Esthe
profitable—could I be sure of it yes,
would."

"There are few of us, I fear," observe
"who, failing the first trial, would prof
second. If once is not enough, twice, th
is, would be too much."

"You think it would be a hazardous
do you?" said Lady Fitzherbert, castin
look back towards the group of merry
the acacias, as their happy voices came
the breeze. "Best, you think, to make
what is left, than to wish for more of
never be?"

"If that does not suffice," replied the V
afraid, as stewards faithless over the little
would stand no better by entrusting us w

That is true," said Esther ;—" waste a penny—
a pound."

suppose, we may date too many of our
les," said Lady Fitzherbert—pausing for a
ent under the portico to take breath after her
t of the steps, for Lady Fitzherbert's figure now
ed rather to the *embonpoint*, and was, to judge
ppearances, at decided variance with the trying
les she seemed always pining under—" to the
mis-spent, and opportunities for ever lost. I
tell Bella so, dear child! who, like her sweet
er—for she is her very image in everything—
for the past and future only. I do wish I
get her more to realize the present. That was
like her dear mother—it was always what she
lone, or meant some day to do."

There are many minds so constituted," said the
; " not because they are not keenly sensible of
nt joys—nay, their sensibilities are often too
—none know how they appreciate, or how they
but themselves,—but because, perhaps, their
are too large, too sanguine, too aspiring—they
t more than they may ever reach."

dy Fitzherbert met the Vicar's eyes as he spoke.
a few moments she was silent. " Let's come
he said ; " I want to have a chat with you about
new banker. We are getting all as rich as
us, I can tell you."

Ah!" exclaimed the Vicar, cheerfully, as they

followed Lady Fitzherbert into the libra
bright fire was blazing up the chimney a
winter, and which threw a ruddy, comfor
on everything that went straightway to his
heart; "this is pleasant! We thin, bilio
are such chilly mortals."

"He often has a fire in his study of
when the air's damp—in July, even," s
elatedly.

"And quite right too, dear. I love
evening myself; and we're now, remembe
few days of September. Though, Crofts
not a room in the house as dry as this.
tell by the books—there's not a spot on th
no draughts, that's a great comfort! or no
of. I can't endure a room with draug
much, is there, wants doing here? Lord
always lived in it when he was down.
think that portrait of Lawrence's—of the
Lord Edward Adrian, magnificent? It's
his best. But, for beauty, dear, you mus
so you shall, please God! after Christmas,
comes up—Sir William Beechey's full le
husband. You met him once, I think, at
You'll be struck! Sometimes, when I'm
thinking of past days, and look at it, as I
hours—it's so delightful, isn't it, to h
solitary discourse with the portrait of a
love?—it seems almost to talk to me—

houghts. I could sometimes almost fancy,
could—it was coming out of the canvass, it is
-like! I declare—and I daresay you'll think
y weak and foolish—I declare, my flesh creeps
when the eyes meet mine. It's life itself! But
ome, let's sit down—and I'll tell you all about
eat 'Gold Vein.' Not at all unlikely, we shall see
'lutus,' as Vaughan laughingly calls him, down
row, if he can get away; though he's neither
nor lame,' Cecil says, 'nor inconveniently timid,'
Banker Nugent Harvey, I can warrant you.
nous, though, seriously, if you've a little loose
o spare, and a mind to try your luck—now's
ime—you've only, dear, to give it to Nugent
y. But, mind you, that's, at present, strictly
nous—he only favours his particular friends."
hen, defend me," thought the Vicar, "from
one among them!" But it was not Lancelot
n's present cue to teach. It was Lancelot
n's cue just now to listen, and be taught some
he did not know, and which no one could en-
n him better on than Lady Fitzherbert; and,
ng his chair to the fire-side, so as to get all the
th he desired for his left leg, and assuming an
ive posture;—Lady Emma, and Bella, and
s Harvey little thought, how interested the
of Marskbury was just then with them—
kind, considerate man!—and their affairs.

CHAPTER XVI.

BELLA.

MEANWHILE, joyously continued to r
breeze the merry voices and laughing littl
happy hearts under the old acacias; v
Gerty and Walter Pemberton, holding so
among the arbutuses, moss-roses, mag
laurestinuses, seemed in no hurry to ex
fragrant breath of the honeysuckles and
for all the other perfumed prizes of Ac
skill in Lady Edith's drawing-room.

"There then," said Clermont, looping
the rope he held in his hand to the t
acacia, first having made fast the other
opposite neighbour some fifteen paces off;
do ?"

"Yes, just the thing," approved Cecil,
chest against the cord. "I shouldn't wo
beat me; though I'd have leaped any fell

r twenty pounds, of my age and weight. But
ts practice. Then, you won't bet on me, Miss
?"

can't bet on both, can I?" asked Annie, simply.
you silly little goose!" cried Rosalie, "I shall
make anything of you. Bet on both?—of
you can! What's easier. That's what they
edging,' darling. *You* talk of going wide of
ark, indeed, with two strings to your bow.
dear, what silliness—how excessively green!
s only to 'hedge' a bit, eh, Mr. Clermont? and
n't lose, can she, Mr. Clermont?"

erfectly unintelligible to me; can't understand it
' laughed Clermont. "Can you, Miss Bella?"
ow Annie can 'hedge?' No, that I cannot."

alf-a-dozen pair of white kids, you said, I think,
Annie?" laughed Cecil, hanging his coat, as
ont did the same, on a bough. "Very well,
re determined I shall have no excuse, I see,
ting off the Roxberry ball."

welve to six on 'the Counsellor,' with you,
Gordon; and six to three on 'Coronet,' with
f you please, Mr. Pemberton," cried Rosalie,
nt Gerty came up to witness the result of the
t. "Let's see, Annie love—ours stands where
eh, darling? Yes, yes—that just suits my
A dozen to half, we said, I believe, Miss
n?"

"Done," agreed Bella. "He *shall* go if he likes."

"A hundred to one neither does it," offered Aunt Gerty, going up to the rope, as high almost as herself.

"Done!—done!" took Cecil and Cler breath;—and, the ground measured out coast cleared—and Clermont having won t off he sprung, agile and elastic as a deer- for the slightest quivering of the rope, ju by the toe, but so slightly as hardly to tible, Cecil had taken no pains. As i measured the distance more narrowly wit and, with apparent ease and unconcern, cord in gallant style.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Clermont, nothin in spite of Rosalie's grave looks and Be tations. "Come, a notch higher then— another try;"—and, all again ready,—had been three inches stiffer than it was, Cle re-established his fair fame.

"By George! well done!" cried C springing after him, he took the leap t his left foot caught, and, though the rope him, he overbalanced himself, and fell hea face.

In a moment Lord Cecil was on his livid with suppressed pain and mortification

"You are hurt—I am sure you are?" said Bella, unning up to him agitatedly, and with a look of eep concern.

"Sit down for a few minutes," advised Aunt Gerty, as Clermont came hastening with a chair. The grass is thick where you fell, so I'm not afraid f any broken bones. Another chair or two, Clermont, there's a good boy."

"I have been looking at the jump," condoled Walter Pemberton; "and you must have been an ntelope to have done it."

"Utterly impossible!" agreed Clermont. "You prung a full yard too soon."

"Lady Fitzherbert had better not know anything bout it," thought Rosalie, "or she'd be frightened ut of her wits. Nor, for pity's sake, your mother, Annie, dear."

"No, no—if there are no broken bones," agreed Annie, "better say nothing about it; or we shall have him put to bed, as sure as fate, poor boy!"

"By George, yes—not for worlds," laughed Cecil, recovering his temper a little, which, in truth, was the only part seriously wounded; "all right now again. By Jove! I shouldn't mind having another try to-morrow by broad daylight."

"You could never do it—no one could," insisted Pemberton.

"It was a splendid leap!" considered
"mine was nothing to it."

"Have you lost anything?" asked Ro
teriously.

Lord Fitzherbert placed his hand aga
breast. "Yes," said he hurriedly, and
coming into his cheeks. "By George!
that? Yes, a memento of my father's.
my heart since his death—as he wore
next his own—in an inner pocket of his
It must have slipped out when I fell."

"I thought so," said Rosalie. "Was
I saw it? or the night dew would have sp
pretty burnish."

"Most fortunate! An odd sort of a bo
isn't it?" smiled Cecil, receiving the pocke
its beautifully burnished case from Rosalie's
handing it to Aunt Gerty. "My fathe
invariably about him. There's a tragic
attached to its possession that makes me v
first copied my father's fancy from a sort
love, more than anything else, for a
Habit makes us do funny things. Someh
feel now complete without it."

"How funny!" said Rosalie. "Would
one?"

"It has killed more than one, I believ
Cecil.

"You don't say so?" exclaimed Annie, shudder-
g. "O, could I wear anything, that had killed any
ne, next my heart?"

"How highly wrought and beautifully finished!
Neapolitan, I suppose?" asked Walter Pemberton,
xamining the hilt.

"Frightful, horrid, nasty thing!" cried Aunt
erty. "Put it up, do! Who knows whether it
asn't drank the heart's blood of some poor, innocent,
elpless creature, with all its spotlessness?"

"Lord Fitzherbert says it has—don't you?" asked
osalie.

"Not exactly, that I know of—the innocent heart's
ood," replied Cecil. "Blood it has spilt—that's
ertain—that I can vouch for. I will tell you the
ory, if you'd like me."

"Yes—do—do!" cried Rosalie, drawing her chair
earer.

"Better not, don't you think, till we get in,"
dvised Bella. "I fear—yes, I do indeed—though
ou will not say so—you must have hurt yourself—
am sure you are in pain."

"Yes, yes—let us go in now," agreed Aunt Gerty,
sing; "and we can have the story afterwards."

"Nonsense! I tell you I'm not hurt at all, not a
it!" insisted Cecil. "Why will you not believe
ne?"

"Because, I know you so well," was on Bella's

lips,—"your enduring, inflexible nature,
choose, and how you can disguise your
but, checking herself, "because," she a
"I am afraid, not to give us pain, you w
uncomplainingly yourself."

"Nay," returned Cecil, in a kinder t
Annie's eyes, as Bella spoke, fixed, as h
admiringly on him; "think you, then, I h
to-night to be sent to bed, like a naughty
out my supper? Has that no terrors
Annie?"

"And leave 'the Counsellor' up, strut
and crowing, indeed, cock of the wa
Rosalie; "I should think not."

"Is the story a long one?" enquired An

"Depends on how it's told," replied Ce

"That's not a bit of matter, darling,'
Rosalie. "Let's have it. It's torturing this
And mind, now, your Lordship don't m
when you come to the *horrible part*."

"It won't take ten minutes from beginni
horrible and all," prefaced Cecil.

"Ten minutes? Call that a horrible st
Rosalie.

"Better make haste about it," recommer
as Aunt Gerty resignedly resumed her chai
shall have Norton after us to a certainty."

"Wisely counselled," granted Cecil.

then, Miss Rosalie—His Excellenza the Duc de Condottini possessed a palace near the palazzo of Milor *Anglais*, Lord Fitzherbert of Castlemore, in the pleasant environs of Naples; 'not to be surpassed,' as the guide books have it, Mr. Pemberton, 'for scenic beauty and most delicious reminiscences.' Comprehends not that, Mr. Pemberton, all that poet, or painter's eye need desire should be said of them? Well, His Excellenza and Milor of Castlemore were bosom friends; living, Miss Gertrude, when in Naples, as neighbours ought of high degree on the most loving terms together; setting the best example, which refutes, by the way, in a breath, Miss Annie, the popular sophism, that the high and noble have no hearts, Miss Annie, but for self.

"Now, His Excellenza, as you know, Miss Bella, had one other bosom friend besides Milor Anglais, one Count Leonardo Borgio by name, whose gallantries and audacities, cousin Clermont, had earned him a reputation from one end of the Papal States pretty nearly to the other. You will not fail to hear of Count Borgio's intrigues, fair cousin, before you have been in Naples half an hour. And, therein, His Excellenza judged not with his usual clearness. Cite me an instance, of man or woman with more than *one* bosom friend, Miss Gertrude. Cite me one in fifty, Mr. Pemberton, who has any. It was a great mistake that of His Excllenza's, cousin Cecil.

His Excellenza had a charming wife, and black-haired, Miss Bella; and Coun Borgio, no less than his Excellenza's con open-sessame to the palace of The Condo less lovely than the Duchessa was the Benedetta Borgio, though her eyes, Miss A blue and bright as heaven, and her gol angels might have envied. Strange! that lenza, out of hundreds of all colours dy smiles, should have wooed the black, if h the blue, Miss Annie! Bosom friendship mutual—his Excellenza must have *his* la well as the Count Borgio.

"Count Borgio was a jealous man, Miss fourteen duels, and two or three other lit you will deem, uglier affairs of honour laid should have taught his Excellenza. But l ally when dazzled by heavenly blue eyes, Miss Annie. His Excellenza's thoughts no all on heaven.

"Among other partialities for British Excellenza rejoiced in Shakspeare and th drama, Mr. Pemberton, which entitles hi you will all agree, to our profound resp Excellenza not only loved the English, Mr. H but their country, their institutions, thei government, their national independance, th freedom of the press, their great '*Times*,

Punch;' and—no—I grieve to say it, Mr. Pemberton —not their National Gallery—that was an abortion! Everything else, cousin Clermont, down to their beef-teaks and John Bullism, his Excellenza waxed warm t the recollection of; but, chiefly, of their theatricals. When his Excellenza got on that hobby, Miss Rosalie, here was no stopping him. His Excellenza would have splendid private little theatre adjoining his palace. His Excellenza threw his ducats about as if they were nere dross. His Excellenza's little theatre drew nore, far more, than the San Carlo of the élite of Naples, Miss Bella;—Milor Anglais, and his Excel-enza usually sustaining, as you know, the leading parts. It was his Excellenza's hobby; his Excel-enza must have a hobby—an English hobby,—and it ost his Excellenza half his fortune.

"A grand triumph was to come off at The Con-lottini. All Naples, Miss Gertrude, was in a ever. His Excellenza was to be King John; the Comtessa Borgio, the Queen; Milor Anglais, Richard The Lion-hearted; the Duchessa Condot-ini, Rebecca; Count Borgio, Ivanhoe; and Lady Fitzherbert, Rowena. There's a caste for you, Mr. Pemberton! But, Lady Fitzherbert falling an inva-id, his Excellenza was *en désespoir*, Miss Annie—what substitute could ever be found for Lady Fitz-erbert? Naples, Miss Rosalie, was ransacked. At he last moment, a substitute, after a fashion, turned

up. Lady Fitzherbert smiled sweetly—
lenza breathed again,—and Ivanhoe a
embraced each other, like brothers, behin

"The curtain fell. Deafening was th
Naples was beside itself! Richard ha
himself! *Io triumphe!*—the Lady Fitzh
see him, *cap-à-pie*, just as he left the fi
his blushing honours thick upon him.
victory was on his brow. 'He would
crowning triumph from her fair hands al

"But 'how was Milor ever to walk
streets, a guy like that?—he would be
the mob.' His palazzo was but a bo
Every moment seemed an age till he laid
at his Lady's feet—go he must, and woul
he would just throw over him a cloak
lenza's, and they would trudge it there t
take a cup of coffee in her bower!

"'Twas a dark night, Miss Rosalie,
wolf's throat! Not a star was out; an
cane, sweeping through the streets, bl
thick and fast into the teeth of his Ex
Milor. They might have gone to shew
herbert their fine feathers without cloak
any fear there was of gibe or jest; for n
have thought of putting their noses out
dark, dismal, drenching night in Naples
have helped it—a sad proof, what ridicu

terous positions, Miss Rosalie, people's vanity in this world will often bring them into.

"'Cospetto! that was a coward's blow—help!' cried Milor, reeling from a heavy poignard-thrust dealt him on the left breast by some unseen hand, with such force as almost to throw him on his back, as, turning the corner of the chestnut avenue that led to the palazzo, with his face muffled up in the collar of his cloak, Milor distinguished nothing but the blackness of the night, Miss Rosalie, and the hollow howling of the blast. 'Diavolo! but the villain aimed it well. Thanks, good cuirass! But for thee, full of weeping and wailing, methinks, instead of joy and merry-making, had been our Lady's bower to-night, sweet Condottini.'

"'St. Giovani Paulo be praised!' cried his Excellenza, supporting Milor with one arm, while he extricated the stiletto from the folds of the cloak in which it had got caught at the hilt with the other. The bungling varlet! to do his work in this way. By St. Marco! it's to be hoped his master will crack his head, or shear him of half his earnings for his clumsiness.'

"Milor' was not aware that he had an enemy in Naples.'

"'You have my cloak on,' reminded his Excellenza. 'We are much of a height. I cannot express how infinitely I am indebted to you! There is no

one, I assure you, to blame in it but yo
you see? That is well. Experience tea
Be careful, I pray you, how you borrow
ple's clothes again in Italy. It leads, I
to sad mistakes sometimes. Not a wor
you! to Lady Fitzherbert. It would pain
and spoil our coffee, which would be a p

"But, wish it as he might, Miss
could not conceal from the loving eyes
lady that he was pale and faint. Th
Milor's valet, did his best to make ligh
claring, 'by St. Angelo, and the Holy
was a *bagatelle*—a mere scratch—a littl
the blood continued to ooze, and the wou
nor was it till Dr. Giacomo, his Exce
physician, had pocketed some dozen of
Milor was able to leave his palazzo, an
out his bosom friend, as he ever after ca
Gertrude, with a new face. But, purg
as they would—they could never r
Rosalie, this spot at the point—just h
observe it—it is hardly visible? That
Rosalie, was my father's blood! Marc,
blood alone could wash blood out, Miss

"My goodness!" cried Aunt Gerty,
"I think there's been quite enough of
Put it away, do, the nasty, horrid thing

"Till his death, my father, as I told

carried it about him when he went from home," continued Cecil, replacing the 'nasty horrid thing!' in its velvet sheath, and restoring it to his pocket; "and from old habit and associations, Miss Annie, there it lies—I can hardly tell you why—it may seem very silly—perhaps it is,—but, somehow, I don't feel complete at all without it."

"I can understand the feeling," smiled Walter Pemberton, "though, I must say, I cannot share the sentiment. But you are so very Italian, you admit, in many of your tastes, that, like Marc, you seem to think as little of murders almost as of macaroni."

"It recalls, I suppose," said Annie, "the happy recollection of your father's providential escape, and for that you prize it?"

"Yes," smiled Cecil, "that's it. I wear it for his sake."

"Did he ever contemplate it as a means of self-defence?" asked Clermont.

"Certainly," replied Cecil, "had he ever needed its assistance."

"And would he have used it, do you think?" enquired Bella. "I doubt it very much. When I say would he, I do not mean for want of courage. But *his* was by far too much the true English heart, the true courage at bottom, however put to it, for Italian vengeance."

"Yes, and do you think you are go
me believe," cried Rosalie, "that if we
attacked, going home over Thorney-Br
gands—as your mother, Annie love, wa
—do you think, now, I'll believe *you*
heart to use it, either? Oh! I doubt y
de-dee! we should both be carried off,
ing—yes, carried off, sweetest—as they
before that tender heart could plant a bl
or pull a trigger. Yes, do you supp
know all about it? A great deal bette
think for. There now—I'd rather tru
tell you, to Huntworth Lowndes' great,
stick, and brawny arm—and wouldn't
dear?—I know you would,—than all the
desperados in Spain and Italy put togeth

"Use it?" returned Cecil, with a tone
sion that sent a cold thrill for a mom
even Rosalie's every nerve;—but, seei
he had produced, while Aunt Gerty,
gauze-shawl closer round her, moved
and Bella towards the house,—"use it-
toy as that, eh, Clermont," laughed h
"with two such stout arms a-piece as ou
Miss Rosalie, and restore her safe and
honest Huntworth,—oh, Miss Annie,
credit for more true British blood than t
Miss Annie. Do, pray, calm Miss Ro

The crab stick has promised us—Heaven and Mrs. Rodney willing—to be—"

"You wicked, incorrigible creature!" cried Rosalie. "See, then, if I won't—"

But the direful threat, whatever it was, died away unuttered, amidst the summonses of Norton to tea, and the rumbling of carriage wheels fast approaching from the lodge; in less than five minutes after which,—with beaming looks and open arms, who should make his appearance, radiant with sunniest smiles, but Nugent Harvey.

Very different as were the feelings induced in the minds of the Castlemore party by the arrival of the new banker, nothing could, seemingly, be more cordially unanimous than the welcome that greeted him on all sides in Lady Fitzherbert's drawing-room that evening. Indeed, to have judged by appearances, one would have thought nothing was wanting but the presence of Mr. Nugent Harvey among them that night, to put the climax to their happiness; and, yet, with the exception of the Vicar, who hailed any opportunity of studying character and making influential friends, there was not one perhaps of that loving little circle but at heart wished him a hundred miles off, if the truth could have been told.

Lady Fitzherbert "was sure she saw in his unclouded brow and gay air, good tidings from the Gold Vein.' So absolutely, indeed, had the thirst

for gain obtained possession of her s
touched the last ten-per-cent dividend,
Harvey's knock of late had become alm
sary to her existence, as her afternoo
Howell's, or her carriage airing round
tine. Still, loved not Lady Fitzherbert N
vey. She felt he had a power, somehow
she felt that that power was every day
her spirit rebelled at the thought, but,
she would, she could not overcome it.
herbert had never acknowledged, in the m
of her money affairs and domestic duti
superior to her own but her husband's.
lived more tenacious of any encroachme
rights and privileges than Lady Fitzherb
no one knew better than Nugent Harve
might have baited the hook in vain, wit
tempting baits than golden ones for Lad
bert. Nugent Harvey was an expert a
knowledge of the gentle art was profoun
extraordinary, his patience perfect, his tac
less, and his successes something wonderful
He had long cast his eyes on Lady Fit
rich preserves; they were well worthy his
His tact had been consummate, his patienc
and he had fairly hooked his fish. Hard
had it struggled to get away, but what were
in the expert hands of Nugent Harvey? "

no fear; he could give it line; dexterously play with it for a time; but, once fairly caught, there was no getting off of hook of Nugent Harvey's. There was no need of hurry. He had other fish, too, to go and catch besides the fish in Hill Street. He would leave her to her swim, apparently, at large; she was hooked—safely hooked—he knew that,—she couldn't get away. He would feed, and let her fatten, and flounder a little longer, and land her when it suited him to do so." And, feeling hooked, no wonder, with spirit like hers, that Lady Fitzherbert, with all her allowed liberty and licence, at times sulked a bit, and sickened rather, at the thought of the very hands that fed and fattened her to surfeit.

For the Vicar, nothing could have pleased him better than this opportunity of making the acquaintance of a person of whom he had heard so much, and with whom he had his own reasons for desiring to stand well.

Esther, seeing her husband was well pleased, was well pleased, too. She took it for granted that, when the Vicar smiled, there must be cause for joy, and, so, Esther's heart kindled kindly towards the banker. And when, presently afterwards, he listened with deepest interest to the miracles the whey-posset had wrought—not only on Cecil, but on the Vicar himself, when he caught that dreadful cold at Betsy Gibbs' funeral that bitter day,—he rose so high

in her estimation, as to induce her to t
moment almost seriously, whether she wo
suade the Vicar to sell out that nine thou
hundred and sixty-two pounds in the Th
Half per Cents, their precious little sa
double it in less than six months in "
Vein ;"—Walter Pemberton, meanwhile,
doubt but that he had that day's "Tim
pocket, containing the second notice of hi
forthcoming new work, "Comforts and
Credit," which was to astonish the world,
the "Wealth of Nations" into shade
Annie and Clermont, comparing notes
choice prints and etchings at a side tab
that, spite of their gratification at seeing
banker,—there was something in his look
repose, they did not like, something put
thing artificial; something, they hardly
to express it—got up—studied—forced—
it struck them ;—Aunt Gerty considerin
cidedly handsome—especially when he s
showed his teeth—and exceedingly entert
agreeable ;—Bella wishing him—not, ger
where thousands, while pressing them
bosoms, wish their loving friends occasio
only, just then, at Jericho ;—and Cecil,
business in the wind—that there was th
"Something Must Be Done" to come o

ye,—responding with the best grace he could to his ld tutor's sly jokes and affectionate congratulations —" thanks to Mrs. Lawton and the Marksbury air"— n his improved looks; and how, "though up to the eck in business, he couldn't resist the temptation of unning down, and judging with his own eyes what iracles they were working;"—Rosalie chiming in chorus, and declaring, "he was one of the best oys in the world, that she would say! now he had one crying his eyes out for his mammy—but that as natural—and his dear, darling little playfellow, ella Gordon; about whom, by the bye, she really as half afraid, at one time, he would, poor fellow! ave broken his little heart—he did take on so."

And now nothing was wanting but the magic harms of music to unite all hearts in one bond of nutual melody, and to make this one of the happiest, not "the very happiest evening!" as Esther, in he fulness of her joy, declared several times to Lady Fitzherbert, "she had known, and that was he truth, since the death of her darling boy." So, while Walter Pemberton lost game after game of chess to the Vicar, because Aunt Gerty would persist in looking on; and Clermont did duty, greatly to his credit, at the piano; and Lord Fitz-herbert and Nugent Harvey vied with each other in playing the agreeable,—Annie and Bella sung some of their sweetest airs; Rosalie filling up the intervals with

selections from Rossini and Beethoven, that elicited audible plaudits from Nuge get more than a gracious smile from v approval of his little finger points, as his epicurean satisfaction, Thalberg h never have even dreamed of.

Well might Esther be happy!

Annie sung some of the sweet, sin of Miss Stephens; with which, more used to win our English hearts; breathed of simple truths, and pure j and all the heart-endearing thoughts c it; and Esther's were not the only e evident testimony to their touching p the favourite songs she knew "one h there present, *once* loved to listen to."

Once! Oh, what jarring discord oft *once!* what a tumult of conflicting em bare thought of it in a moment fill t *Once!* Was it the thought that reflec that, while she sung, lent to Bella's ri tones of thrilling pathos? and, as Cec to her side, and met her gaze, brought drops into her eyes?

How answered at that moment the Fitzherbert?

"Poor child! she's far from well, Fitzherbert, aside to Esther. "She h

ll the thing for some time. I feel quite anxious bout her. She used to be such a gay, happy reature!—it was impossible to feel dull with her,"

"Let her come to Marksbury, now do!" entreated Esther. "You see what good it has done Cecil."

"So she shall some day, I'm determined, dear. A run at the sea side, first, I'm in hopes will set us oth up. We *both* want a change. St. Leonard's lways does me so much good. I really don't think could live the year round"—and Lady Fitzherbert ighed—"without a sea-blow. My nerves are not what they used to be. I've had a deal to try them! t's so provoking, too, just now, isn't it? poor child! hen she wants all her best looks? She's not the hing at all to night. But he doats on her, doats n her, dear, to distraction—that I'm sure."

The Vicar compared his watch with the beautiful ld Tuscan clock on the mantle-piece. "Time for ood folks to be wishing good night and God bless ou," said he.

Ere another hour, all, to the outward eye and ear, as still as the sleep of death in the lordly halls of Castlemore.

We say outward;—so, with the magic key at our ommand, let us take a peep and see, gentle reader, or your satisfaction, how the interior corresponded ith the exterior in the peace-breathing sleeping hambers of Lady Fitzherbert's gentle guests. Let

us take them as they came in our
gallery.

If sound slumbers are denied to any
at ease, clear, one would think, mu
Nugent Harvey's conscience; for, th
not on tip-toe, nor took the precaution
night-light from his brows, soundly s
pering banker, utterly unconscious of o

What a blessing a clear conscie
Castlemore!—there seemed none but cl
under thy hospitable roof that peaceful

We pass on from Walter Pemberton
Onslow's bed sides, whose dreams mu
been pleasant, or they would not have
so calmly with that serene smile still pl
lips;—and we need glance but for a
the sleeping forms of those two happy
placid breathing would have scarcely
petal, or sullied the brightest mirror;
tarry above an instant beside the couch
a heart, that, from the bosom's gentle
have known no hopeless care;—nor in
the slumbers of the Vicar and all-lovin
wishing Esther Lawton; for what be
could we desire of the heart at ea
spirit at peace with itself and all manl
convincing chorus of congenial souls
greeted us as we lingered for a moment

told us all we sought to know—and more. Even nbition, supposed to be so wakeful, could sleep und, and snore too, like a top,—only keep it hipped up well enough.

But what sight transfixed us now—as, pausing on e threshold horror-struck, we could hardly trust r staggered senses, while, close to us, suppressed sobs anguish and reproach sent a cold tremour through r hearts that kept us speechless. Wherefore fell e hot tears so fast down those pale cheeks; where-re those appealing looks of ill-placed love, and rror, and tenderness, and compunction, and rage, and erce resentment; wherefore those agonizing struggles etween strength and weakness, and passion and wakening reason?—as, with one arm wound round er waist, while with the other he tried to hold st the trembling hand struggling in his grasp, ecil Fitzherbert poured his tale of sufferings, as he alled them, into his darling Bella's ear:—

"Cold, cruel girl! you do not love me as you used; r why those tears—why this unkind doubt—why his distrust? You never doubted—you never dis-rusted—you never averted your face from me before. es, yes—I see it all—you do not love me as you sed—no, no—I am no longer, Bella—'tis so—'tis o—the same Cecil to you I was."

Oh the double masked hypocrite! "She did not ove him as she used—he was no longer the same

Cecil to her;" and, yet, at the same moment that the lie was on his lips, he strained her to his breast almost unresisted, and kissed away the burning tears from her willing cheek. We felt a cold thrill creep over every nerve as we gazed. A moment's struggle—ah—Great God!—we breathed again! Releasing herself by a sudden determined effort from his circling arm—for an instant the foster sister seemed to collect her wandering thoughts, as she kept her eyes fixed, like one bewildered, on her foster-brother.

At length, "would you so woo Annie Lawton?" said she, with a calmness that brought the blood again to our pulse. "Good night. It is high time we knew each other, Cecil."

Faster throbbed our heart—so fast, that its heavings might almost have been heard. O, joy!—Reason was triumphant—villany quailed beneath its glance! and passing on rejoicing, but one other visit of love, and our task was over.

"Thank goodness that's done!" sighed Lady Fitzherbert, having finished writing some letters she was anxious to despatch to St. Leonard's by the next morning, and which had kept Norton waiting to undress her till long past midnight;—"heigho! I don't know why Norton, but I've had such a weight all day at my heart, and I ought, oughtn't I, to be so happy?"

"It's the air, my Lady, nothing else," replied Norton, rousing herself from her nap at the bed

ad. "It never did agree with your Ladyship, and never agreed with anybody else that I ever heard."

"It must be, I suppose. I'm sure it's damp. I ways feel such a sinking—such a peculiar depres-on here."

"Your Ladyship had better take two of the cam-or pills," advised Norton. "It *is* the damps."

"And Miss Gordon—how very poorly, don't you ink so, poor child, she has been looking all to-day? cannot think what ails her."

"Yes, hasn't she?" returned Norton, using the sy privileges of speech permitted an old servant. Dreadful!"

"I don't know about 'dreadful,'" said Lady Fitz-rbert, resigning herself to her maid's hands; "but e certainly does get very pale and thin."

"Thin!" caught up Norton. "It makes my heart-he! There—her two last new silk dresses, the le canary and the shot blue—I could hardly get em together with the French stays,—and look now -law! you can lap them over this much—without lling a bit;—it's heart-aching, that it is, to see it."

"Poor dear child!" sighed Lady Fitzherbert; "I ink she frets a good deal about me. She knows ow much I've suffered lately with my nerves—she's o feeling, so considerate! What with one thing or nother, I hardly know, and that's true, what's come o me. I suppose I'm getting old."

"Old, my Lady? Well, now, I was remarking to Crofts only to-day," returned Norton—"how young your Ladyship was looking."

"O you naughty flatterer!" sighed Lady Fitzherbert, raising her eyes to the glass.

"And not a grey hair yet to speak of—search ever so," added Norton, brushing away.

"Why search for what you don't want to find?" asked Lady Fitzherbert, smiling.

"Law now! there's Mrs. Lawton, can't be older than your Ladyship—and see the difference!"

Again Lady Fitzherbert's eyes sought the facts of the case, and inwardly acknowledged there was some justice in what Dinah said. "I wear pretty well, you think? Well, if I could only get a little nice, refreshing sleep, I shouldn't mind. But, I don't know how it is—I can't sleep—and never could at Castlemore."

"Nor I, my Lady, a wink," condoled Norton; "nor—and that's as bad almost—eat, or drink anything, hardly, to talk of, from the moment I set my foot in it, to the moment I turn my back on it, and never could."

"Well, we must see what St. Leonard's will do for us all. Stay here I can't, and won't, after the Vicar goes home, if this nasty sinking don't go off. The air *is* damp—unquestionably damp—there can't be two opinions about that. I don't care what

Crofts says—she's used to it. See how pale and pulled they all look hereabouts—it can't be wholesome. A blessing my dear boy's so well."

"He looks beautiful! that he does!" agreed Norton. "And so much fatter! But, then, Marksbury's so healthy!"

"And how happy he seems at the Parsonage—that's such a comfort to me, Norton."

"So it must be," responded Dinah. "And Miss Lawton—there's a lovely creature! I declare, I couldn't, try ever so, keep my eyes off her all day. I think I never did see such a beautiful pair in all my life as Miss Annie and my Lord! And so Crofts and Adam Roots said, too, when they were walking together on the terrace. Bridget declared, 'they seemed made for each other.' Miss Bella's beautiful, very! I think I never saw such black eyes! And her hair—when it's let down—"

"My God! what was that?" exclaimed Lady Fitzherbert, turning pale as death and catching Norton's arm for support, as a suppressed scream, followed by the sound of hurried footsteps in the gallery, suddenly broke on the dead stillness of the night, and rooted both mistress and maid with momentary terror to the spot; in an instant or two after which, an impatient knocking at the door, and the voice of Bella, requesting admittance in evident alarm, drawing off Lady Fitzherbert's fears for herself to the assistance

of her ward—"open it, open it—quick, quick!" said she, livid with fright and trembling all over; when, the bolt lifted, in rushed Bella, more like a spectre than a being of flesh and blood, so deadly pale and cold was she! and, throwing herself into Lady Fitzherbert's arms—"save me—save me!" she cried, and fell swooning on the floor.

Sinking on her knees, Lady Fitzherbert bent in an agony of alarm over her ward's senseless form.

"She's had a fright—I'm sure of it. Poor dear child! she'll be better presently," said Norton, feelingly; but, with the knowledge of long experience, using those active simultaneous means for the restoration of the ebbing current, worth, in effect, a thousand of all Lady Fitzherbert's well-meant, but useless hopes, and sighs, and lamentations put together. "A dream, perhaps — yes, that's it — a dream, I'll warrant—of that horrid Agnes Crofts. Heaven send us all safe and sound back again to May Fair; or anywhere else out of this hunked place!"

For more than an hour incessantly continued Norton to rail against the 'hunked place,' to bathe the temples, and apply the salts. Never, in all her experience had Dinah Norton's skill been longer tried.

At length, gradually came back the life-tide to its usual channels—the heart resumed its functions—and animation returned slowly but surely to the pulseless clay.

"My child, my sweet, my darling!" repeated Lady Fitzherbert, affectionately, as the dear eyes open on her, and fondly kissing the still cold lips, while they in vain struggled to give utterance to the tumult of thoughts with which the aching brain was reeling. "Yes, yes, my darling—I know what you would say —yes, sweetest—you are safe and happy now—you are—you are. My precious child!—see—see—yes, you are in the arms of a mother—a fond—a kind—a loving mother, Bella."

A faint smile, but O how full of sweetness! told that fond, loving mother she was heard and understood.

"She had better not talk too much now," advised Norton, arranging the drooping head more comfortably on Lady Fitzherbert's pillow. "A nice, long sleep will do her a world of good! There's no more fear. You can get into bed now, my lady—that'll keep her warm, and snug, and make her happier; and I'll sit up a little while till she falls off."

"Do," said Lady Fitzherbert, following Norton's advice. "She's getting warmer now, dear child. Place me another pillow. You have locked the door. It *must* have been a dream."

"What—what?" cried Bella, grasping Norton's hand convulsively, and glaring wildly round her,—"a dream—a dream? Oh, no—no!—horrid—horrid!"

and bursting into tears, the poor torn, lone, lacerated heart hid its face in Lady Fitzherbert's bosom.

"I thought so," said Norton—"I was sure of it. She don't know what she says. They were talking of the ghost—I heard them—before they went to bed."

"Poor lamb!" sighed Lady Fitzherbert; "she is so sensitive! Heigho! I think, Dinah, I must take two of the camphor pills. These repeated shocks I'm afraid will kill me."

CHAPTER XVI.

A MOTHER OF A THOUSAND.

"THIS is one among the sweetest pleasures of country life, I think," said Nugent Harvey, exchanging morning salutations with Walter Pemberton, after a long friendly chat with Adam Roots, and leaving the pleasing impression on Adam's mind, that, of all the pleasant-spoken gentlemen he ever talked with, Mr. Harvey, all to nothing, was the most so. It passed Adam's knowledge, where Mr. Harvey could have got all his learning from; "he seemed to understand all about grounds and gardening as well as he did; there was nothing, seemingly, that he didn't know."

And herein consisted much of the secret of Nugent Harvey's power with his species. Knowledge, and the tact how to use it to advantage, had been the study of his life, since, thrown on his own resources, his eyes were opened to the rich harvests

that clever farming on the broad lands of human vanity and ambition was capable of producing.

"What a devilish lucky fellow by Jove! you are Harvey!" would greet the new banker at every turn.

"No luck in it," he would answer to Charlie Ferrers and other bosom friends; "not a bit of it. I am strong, Charlie boy, because others are weak, that's all, nothing else."

"How the deuce you do it?" puzzled Charlie. "You don't read."

"Don't I? A great mistake of yours, my dear fellow; I am reading from morning to-night."

"What?"

"Human nature."

"What a study!"

"Can anything be finer?"

"Can anything be more sickening?"

"Edifying and amusing, I assure you, to the last extreme."

"Profitless, but for waste purposes, as Parliament speeches, nineteen out of twenty of 'em."

"Productive, pardon me, as the mines of Peru."

"Of what? Hang it! I've brains enough for that, and never turned a penny by it."

"You don't understand, then, what you read."

"If I did, I havn't your tact."

"There's something in that," would Nugent

Harvey acknowledge, smilingly, and expanding his chest. "Knowledge *is* the first thing, Charlie boy; but mark!—it's of no more use, Charlie, in the market, without the necessary tact—yes, that's it—to carry it to account,—than are those cards of yours, Master Charlie, without that clever dodge, you know of, to do the trick."

"There now! Oh, for shame! It's all trickery, then, is it?" would Charlie cry indignantly, and dashing down the pack.

"That's the word, Charlie boy—trickery, trickery! It's the pivot we go on, Sir, from first to last—from the cradle to the grave—from the coronet to the costermonger—high and low—rich and poor—Church and State—one and all—good, bad and indifferent—trickery's the word, my boy—the best hand at it, turning up most trumps—that's it, Charlie. It's all a trick—a consummately clever trick—a splendid trick—splendidly played, Charlie—to disguise imposture, and bamboozle fools."

"Ha, ha, ha!" would Charlie boy laugh, till the tears ran over; "you don't say so? By Jove! But the Knave's the best card after all, I say—when it comes to 'beggar my neighbour'—dash my wig! then, if it isn't."

Knowledge of the weaknesses of the human heart, and the tact how best to turn them to account, had been the chief study of Nugent Harvey's life; and

it must be owned he had made himself a tolerable master of his task. As Adam Roots said, "it was wonderful where he got all his knowledge from; there was nothing that Mr. Harvey did not seem to know." And, as with simple Adam, the pleasing impression he contrived to leave on the minds of his hearers was not the least evidence that, so far, his tactics answered well. They did answer exceedingly well, after Nugent Harvey's fashion; and, so answering, it was no part of his tactics to wish the world one whit wiser than he found it.

The ready suffrages on all sides that clever tact and constant courtesy command is something passing the belief of artless minds. It would be well if they understood it better than they do. Men fall not easily into the traps they set themselves; the bird will laugh to scorn the familiar snare; the fish turn up his nose at the stale, notorious bait. But, with their eyes wide open, and all their faculties about them, they are hooked and netted every hour, if only an adept hand like Nugent Harvey's spread the toils, and tickle them with a little management and skill. How many thousands at this moment, who think themselves so very sensible, so very far-seeing, and so very safe, such excellent pilots of their own prized craft!—are surely hooked, at the mercy of one hand, ready to be stranded, come the first wailing of the tempest, lost vessels on the barren beach; because

they are fools enough to trust themselves and their little all to the desperate guidance of a Nugent Harvey! Poor blind fools! with all their far-sightedness—they will be tickled—they will be trapped! In the hands of "Saints and Angels" they must be safe—'twould be sacrilege to doubt it for a moment. Had the great majority been asked, how it was Nugent Harvey got on so surprisingly, why everything he touched seemed to turn to gold?—they would have probably answered, as did Charlie Ferrers, "because he had the talents for it." They would have been much nearer the mark had they said the *tact*. There is considerable difference, in their moral bearings, between the two words. Though both may serve their masters well, in worldly things, without a grain of honesty; the one promises, *per se*, better fruits, seemingly, than the other; and, *per se*, is proportionately fuller of fond hopes. In his heart, nothing hated Nugent Harvey so much, perhaps, as business, *qua* business, looked at in its plain, plodding, progressive sense—the only sober sense in which to view it. Successes by *coup de main*, having no fixed root, like the sources from which they owe their origin, must ever be short-lived. Enduring heritages have never come, in business, from lottery boxes or the turn up of a die. Nugent Harvey had no more talent, in the right sense, for business, properly so called, than Lady Fitzherbert herself; but he had con-

summate *tact*, especially in two things, 1st.—in appearing to know a great deal more than he did, and 2nd.—where he thought he saw the end worthy of the means, in never defeating that end for want of the due skill, and patience, and perseverance to bring it to a successful issue.

It is quite astonishing to see what commercial wonders these three co-partners will perform! in such hands as "Saints and Angels," without a grain of honesty to put opposite the sum total. Nugent Harvey saw he must be the architect of his own fortune. Nugent Harvey had no taste for business of any kind; but Nugent Harvey had tact. Nugent Harvey saw, would he be rich, his "*Senior Optime*" was no more use to him, for that end, than the merits of Jacob Penfold, the curate of St. Mary's—whose afternoon sermons he made it a point of conscience, weather permitting, always to attend,—to entitle him to be Bishop of London, excellent young man that he was! Nugent Harvey saw other men, with no more brains than himself—many with not a tithe as much—raking gold in by the hands-ful; and why not he? What he wanted of talent he would make up by tact. He would be a banker; he would, if he could, be of the immaculate firm of "Saints and Angels." Lady Fitzherbert's interest was great; her wealth was greater; the Bishop's interest greatest of all;—he would never rest till that wealth and that interest had done society the service his heart was set on.

The worst, or, rather, the best, for poor honesty, of universal success, is—it renders reckless; unless in the grasp of that noble mould of mind and matter, which, like pure gold, comes out purer from the furnace for the burning. Were it not so, poor honesty might hang its head inconsolable; Messrs. Bodkin, Ballantyne & Co's Old Bailey experiences would be much abridged; and the scales of Justice be about as big a farce as used to be enacted, pretty well six days out of every seven, in the dingy old parlor-back of Saints and Angels.

"This is one among the sweetest pleasures of country life," was the blooming Banker's morning salutation to Walter Pemberton on Castlemore's flowery lawn, and spoken with sincerity no doubt. It would have been hardly possible to have partaken of the sweet smiling offerings there greeting him at every turn in such perfection—however captivating the charms of Jermyn Street and the prolific parlor-back, —and not responded, at least, with "yes—how delicious—how delightful!"

"I was thinking so, too, at the moment," replied Walter Pemberton. "An hour, thus spent, of early day—for fresh and invigorating impressions, is worth all the rest of the twelve put together, to my thinking."

"It is indeed!" responded Nugent Harvey. "What floods of new lights, and bright conceptions, and purer

feelings, and nobler resolutions fill the soul at early morning."

"You would say so more, I think," rejoined Pemberton—"if a lover of the picturesque—a great deal more, at Marksbury, than here."

"So Miss Lawton was telling me. I am neither author, nor artist, for anything pen or pencil of mine have ever achieved further than, in younger days, a lady's album may bear witness to; but I can *feel* what an hour thus spent, as you say, must be to the soul of the poet or the painter. You carry home, I suppose, some sweet *souvenirs* of the old place in your portfolio?"

"Yes, a few; as many as my various other delightful Parsonage pleasure takings have left me a chance for."

"In pencil, or crayons?"

"Pencil."

"Astonishing the strides our modern water-colour schools have made of late?"

"As an Art, we are not yet aware, I fancy, of what it is fully capable."

"The effects produced in some instances—the depth, and breadth, and tone—are equal almost to any oils?"

"Superior in some instances, I fancy," said Pemberton,—"for the expression of certain landscape tints."

"Well, so I should imagine. The waters admit, do they not, of greater variety of light handlings, and transparent shadowings—I don't know how to express it better—than the oils?"

"No doubt of it, for certain effects; if cleverly managed, there is a happy facility, in the tintings, with water-colours, that oils can never possess."

"They have three other great advantages, I should think," said Nugent Harvey,—"require much less labour—are quicker available in the market—and far less injurious to the health."

"True," assented Pemberton. "The serious sacrifice of time that in many instances can be ill spared, and of precious health that can never, with impunity, be forfeited, over the oil-easel—no little slip of green paper in the corner can ever sufficiently repay. It is not every purchaser, I'm afraid, who hugs himself, *as he ought*, in the possession of his 'most decided bargain.'"

"Very few," smiled Nugent Harvey. "The least beauty we recognize in our purchase is not unfrequently that which should constitute, if merit had its due, its principal value in our eyes. But who, alas! ever thinks, when he puts on his clean comfortable shirt of a morning—how many head and heart-aches have been patiently endured over its construction for a shilling?"

"Ah! who indeed? 'Tis a monster evil! And

the philosophy it requires, to keep the poor wrung shoulder steadily to the collar—up hill work—drag, drag on, as it must—strain, strain—lash, lash, lash—goad, goad, goad—strive and struggle on as merit may—break its poor heart under it often as it does,—is something fearful!"

"While a new ballet-dancer, or a Mr. Barnum," added Nugent Harvey, "are made gods and goddesses of for a new grand *pas*, or a pigmy urchin in a man's cocked hat."

"Rather discouraging certainly, at first sight," admitted Pemberton. "One gets his good things in this life, I suppose; the other patiently endures to the end, and has no reason, may be, in the long run to complain."

"Well, I call Barnum a clever fellow, though," smiled Nugent Harvey. "I call any man clever, who picks up the good things, for the asking, as brother Barnum does; while your poor devil MERIT, in obscurity, starves over its *chef-d'œuvres*, unrecognized, in a garret."

"It cannot steal," said Pemberton, "and to beg it is ashamed."

"Cheat! you don't suppose brother Barnum thinks himself a cheat?" laughed Harvey.

"Fools must and will be fooled, no doubt."

"They must. We are sick of common-places. We respect virtue; can acknowledge merit, where it

is in fashion; and reward it, too, liberally, when we *must;* but that is the business of life; it takes its regular, prescribed course with other things; it is our duty—and we do it. But we are weary of regularities—duty is a hard task-master. We want amusement; we must have amusement; something out of the common; something extraordinary; something miraculous; nay, something downright monstrous! if you can. Where is Barnum—we want Barnum—we *must*—we *will* have Barnum! From palace to cottage it's—Barnum—Barnum—Barnum—we must—we will have Barnum! 'Ladies and gentlemen—your devoted, humble servant, brother Barnum, at your service!' Yes, on my conscience! don't you think so?—a clever—a monstrous clever fellow, brother Barnum!"

"Certainly," agreed Pemberton,—"if there were no fools, there would be fewer knaves."

"Very necessary ingredients in the grand mass," smiled Nugent Harvey. "We *will* be fooled, Sir—we *must* be fooled! Our constitutions would sink to sleep without it. Our thick Saxon blood get as sluggish and muddy as old Father Thames, but for a little purging now and then through the filters of self-sifting."

"What are our teachers about?"

"Greek and Latin; the deux-temps, crochet, calisthenic postures, and embroidery. Yet, foolery

yields its ample harvests, rich as ever. I'm inclined to think, men learn wisdom oftener from being convicted fools than anything else. We prize, and profit by, generally, what we pay for most. Experience is the best of tutors. What teaches the art of war, like going to war; what the value of peace, but having paid the price? Wherein learn administrations *their* insufficiencies; admirals and armies *their* incapacities,—not in their successes, but their failures. They must find it out by *failure;* success would never teach it them. They must be the dupes of their own vanity, and prejudice, and blindness, ever to see clear. They can only be taught wisdom, by first becoming fools. It is the sole chance left us for sounder views and safer rule. What child most dreads the fire?—what pilot keeps the keenest look a-head?—who buttons up his breeches pockets tightest, when come the charlatan and mountebank, as he who has been gulled? Yes, your Barnums, Sir, depend on it, are god-sends to society at large! Anything is a god-send! that teaches man, with all his self-love and self-esteem, what a deal he wants of the full measure, that makes up—when passion is appealed to—the full standard of the precious wisdom he so boasts of. 'Faith! a pity, that our experiences are often bought so monstrous dear!"

"They are bought cheap enough, at any price," replied Pemberton, thoughtfully, "if they but pur-

chase, in time, the right knowledge of their true, intrinsic worth."

"No doubt of it," assented Nugent Harvey. "In comparison with the intrinsic value;"—but the appearance of Lady Fitzherbert and the Vicar on the terrace, announcing breakfast, cut short the banker's ripe fruits of experience; and "Now for the reward of wisdom in one shape," said he, turning towards the house. "If 'early to bed, and early to rise' don't always make 'healthy, and wealthy, and wise;' they have the merit, at any rate, of giving a good appetite."

"A very sufficient one, too," agreed Walter Pemberton; "especially when there are no misgivings as to the ability of gatifying it, which is something."

When Lord Fitzherbert entered the breakfast-room, pressed his mother's hand, and kissed her cheek, a glance sufficed to assure him that he had nothing to fear from Bella's anger and resentment; and, this load removed, after the suitable expressions of grief at the severe headache Lady Fitzherbert assigned for her absence that morning from the table, and obtaining leave to go and see her when up, if she did not feel well enough to come down;—"It must have been her steps across the gallery, and the knocking at your door, then," said he, "that I heard in the night; but, really, there are so many odd noises, when the wind whistles, in these large old houses—that—that—"

"Unless one's conscience is pretty clear," filled up Nugent Harvey—the chocolate rather scalding his Lordship's throat at the moment—"away to sleep, with those shaky old folks dancing minuets to each other all night along the walls."

Aunt Gerty, as also Walter Pemberton, who was a light sleeper, "had indistinct recollections, now they thought of it, of queer sounds more than once; but had fallen off again and heard nothing more."

All the rest had "slept sound as tops—had never slept sounder in their lives;" though 'the mulberry spots,' in defiance of all Aunt Gerty could say, would persist in sitting up in bed a good half hour after their candles were out, talking of Agnes Croft's ghost; "a decided proof," in Esther's mind, "that talking of ghosts was no harm, not a bit of it, if the digestive functions, as Dunlop called them, were in good order. And there was the benefit of always—and she made a point of never getting into bed herself without her night draught, as she called it, and making the Vicar take it, too, when she could—there was the benefit of always drinking a small tumblerful of cold spring water, or weak camomile tea, before going to sleep, and taking care not to lie, on your back. She could mention a hundred instances.

Rosalie "thought her own personal experiences, and those of the Vicar were ample for any one! She could bear testimony, herself, to the surprising

efficacy of the spring water. There was wonderful virtue, too, in the camomile! The only fault of it was—at least, she always found it so—it, somehow, always kept her awake all night, thinking how horribly nasty it was! But that could not be said, anyhow, of the spring water. There was that night they were at Hazelcombe—when that silly Huntworth nearly frightened them to death with the White Lady,—she drank a glass of spring water before she got into bed; and, though she and Ann had it all over before she closed her eyes—"

"'The devil a spectre,' as Mike Sullivan says, was to be seen, I'll be sworn for it!" laughed Lord Fitzherbert, "but the spectre of charming Misthress Rodney! No—not of Misthress Rodney? Then, commend us, gentle Sirs, in sober earnestness, next time we're haunted with the blues, to Miss Rosalie's simple soporific; it must have wondrous virtues, by the powers! to defy the Rodney."

Lady Fitzherbert "thought its simplicity was its greatest recommendation."

"Its *modus operandi*," agreed the Vicar, "was perfectly intelligible."

"To the intelligent, that might be in its favour," Nugent Harvey was inclined to believe. "But he had heard a great physician once say, 'that, if he wished his patient to have great faith in his skill, he never prescribed him, at first, a rhubarb draught.'"

Walter Pemberton was "very much of opinion himself that more than half the virtue of the prescription lay often in its unintelligible characters."

"Well," Aunt Gerty "must own, she drank Dr. Dunlop's horrible stuff—though a thousand times more horrible!—with ten times the gusto of her own."

"That's just it," agreed Esther. "I can't tell you the trouble I have with them sometimes. I send them the very same thing—for nothing—that Dunlop charges half-a-crown for; and there it stands, or is put in the cupboard, or tossed out of window, as if it wasn't worth twopence."

"Only another familiar illustration of the stupendous powers of faith," observed the Vicar. "It worked wonders."

Annie "had more faith in her mother's *nostrum* book, than in all the three pharmacopœias put together."

Clermont "was quite of the same mind; and wished for nothing better, when he wanted doctoring, than Mrs. Lawton and the whey posset. He could mention a hundred instances;"—which seeming perfectly conclusive to everybody, the conversation took a turn; though not before Rosalie had declared emphatically and positively to Lord Fitzherbert that "if he teased her any more about Mrs. Rodney, she would jump at the first chance Huntworth gave her, and, then, he might go and break his heart at leisure."

After breakfast, the Vicar, having taken the cream off "The Morning Post," set out with Nugent Harvey, on foot, for Linwood—to see and probably pass the day with Peter Worthington. Esther stayed at home with Lady Fitzherbert, to attend the consultation when Bella awoke, and give her advice on a host of other little domestic matters none more competent to deal with than Esther Lawton. Lord Fitzherbert and Arnold Webster must devote an hour or two to business; so, Walter Pemberton and Clermont—the idea hitting Aunt Gerty's fancy to a T,—rod in hand, and young Adam for a guide, sallied forth with Annie and Rosalie, to try for the six-pounder "had hitherto defied them all," Adam said, "in the Spinnie Loch."

A long sound sleep had done all that Norton predicted for her patient, and Bella awoke much refreshed, though still with slight pain in the forehead, which, no doubt, would go off after her breakfast, and a turn or two after that in the fresh air.

"You feel better now, love, I'm sure," said Lady Fitzherbert, taking her ward's hand as she looked up and greeted her guardian mother with a grateful smile. "Yes, you look better, dear, a great deal! But this air never did, and never will agree with either of us—it's so relaxing, so depressing! I feel quite cut up myself to-day—my nerves all of a twitter—I can't tell what ails me. Heaven grant it's

only nervousness; for I've had such a sinking—such a load at my heart the last day or two; and those sinkings with me, you know, love, are—"

"I think I'd better open the window a little," interrupted Norton; "it will refresh the room and let in the sun."

"Do you think you can bear the draught, love?" hesitated Lady Fitzherbert, shifting her seat to a less exposed position.

"Oh, yes!" said Bella, fetching a deep breath as the fresh air fanned her temples; "if not too much for you."

"I'll go down and see about your tea, love, and a new-laid egg; or some marmalade—you like that better, don't you? Though trying, I am confident, to the nerves, perhaps tea will be more refreshing for you, to-day, than chocolate. Not green. I should never have suffered as I have done with my nerves, if it hadn't been for green tea. I used to take a dish of it invariably, as you know, love, for years after dinner, at one time. It's poison! Cecil's now closeted with Webster, and I'm so glad of it!—they'll be doing something in earnest at last, about those Stoneley farm repairs, and it's high time! I'll tell him you'll be down presently. Poor boy! he has been fretting himself into a fever all the morning about you. He's all feeling! I never saw but one other, and that was his dear father, with such a

heart! I remember, when I used to be ill—for I don't think any one can have suffered more with their nerves than I have done—his untiring attentions and solicitude were something beautiful beyond expression! It is in such times alone, love, that the real heart speaks out. And the more beautifully, as coming from one so, apparently, stern and unexcitable. I do think those seemingly stern and unimpassioned natures feel—when it comes to the test—more a great deal, dear, than your simpler, softer ones. Impressions—of that I am convinced—take a deeper, firmer root with them; and, where they give their heart—and that's what I often think of Nugent Harvey, too—where they give their heart, love,—it is no common, ordinary gift,—like nine tenths of what they call their heart-gifts now-a-days—mere empty shews—mere shallow shams—all outside, big and blooming, and soft, and smiling enough; but hollow, most of them, as a pumpkin—come to scan them closely."

A swimming tear—how erroneously interpreted by Lady Fitzherbert!—was Bella's only answer. But it spoke all that Lady Fitzherbert sought to know; and, quietly pressing her lips in gratified acknowledgement to her ward's burning cheek:—

"Now, then, let Norton dress you, love," said she, tenderly; "you will feel better, dear, when you're up. And I'll go and tell Crofts to have your breakfast taken into my boudoir. And, then—while I run with

Esther Lawton over the house—Cecil will have done with Webster, and can have a chat, and a cup with you, for he took hardly anything, poor boy! at breakfast. And, then, you can take a turn together round the gardens till they come back from their fishing—they're all gone over to the Spinnie-Loch with their rods and baskets after the great trout Adam was talking of.—And, if it's fine after luncheon, we'll go, if you like, and see Peter Worthington; and, if he'll part with them, fetch the Vicar and Nugent Harvey back to dinner; for I can guess who won't be best pleased to be doing duty to-day at Linwood, with his heart—but he is so kind always and considerate for others—with his heart, poor fellow! left behind him at Castlemore—can't you, my sweetest?"

Bella's chest heaved again as though relieved of an overwhelming weight, as Lady Fitzherbert left the room; when, resigning herself to Norton's experienced hands, none but a keen observer would have supposed, as she presently after entered the boudoir, looking, though a shade paler and more pensive than usual, more interestingly beautiful that morning than ever! that anything had occurred to dim the fire of those lustrous eyes, or to throw a withering blight over the budding hopes of that too loving heart.

No keener observer of what interested him than Cecil Fitzherbert; and, though veiled under a strong effort, not a thought that rushed through that de-

voted heart—as, building on his hold of her affections, he awaited, with a look he safely reckoned on, the effect of Bella's approach,—but what he was far more master of than she herself. And Cecil Fitzherbert had a ready tongue as well as an observant eye, when it suited him to use it on occasions.

"I expected to be crushed, and you hold out the right-hand of forgiveness," said he, in a deep tone of self-reproach, and a look of penitent dejection that became him well, as soon as Norton had withdrawn, and—Esther having satisfied herself that there was no organic mischief—Esther's experiences dealing far more in head-aches than in heart-aches,—Lady Fitzherbert felt free to attend Crofts and Arnold Webster on the house surveys.—"Your generosity—" and Lord Fitzherbert's voice faltered with emotion—"your generosity—how ill deserved! while it fills my heart with re-assurance, overwhelms me, too, Bella, I would say dearest! but for that chilling frown—overwhelms me, too, with shame."

"Then, be no less generous in return, if you are sincere," replied Bella, the tear swimming, but with a command of feeling and calmness of tone that surprised herself; "and let this be the last allusion between us of any sort, Cecil, to a subject, even to think of which is bitter punishment enough."

"In your anger—I grant my mad passion and folly have deserved it—" replied Cecil, sadly; "in

your just indignation at my want of self-control; my ardent impetuosity; my blind fondness; my mad passion; my resistless love—"

"Love—love! For shame, Cecil! No, no—profane not so that pure, that holy, honoured word. Love!—nay, nay—God forbid!"

"By Heaven!" cried Cecil, "you misjudge—you do indeed!"

"Hush, hush, or I shall hate you! Misjudge you? No," said Bella, sadly. "I understand you, Cecil, perfectly; and you must understand me, too. By this token—" and Bella extended her hand, which Cecil lifted in silence to his lips;—"by this token, there is no angry thought between us now. What I have suffered you will never know. It was but the righteous penalty required for the infringement of the righteous law—the just punishment I richly deserved, for my ungrateful selfishness, and deception, and hypocrisy."

"Deception and hypocrisy!" echoed Cecil. "On whose part, Bella?"

"On mine, Cecil. I am thankful for it. His judgments are great mercies. The scales have fallen from my eyes. It has pleased Him, in mercy, to awaken me to a sense of my own blindness. Now I see—now I understand clearly. Yes, I was blind before. That was my own sin. Nay, attempt not to delude me any more—it *is* so—it *is* so!"

"Hear me!" entreated Cecil. "You say that you forgive me; and, yet, see how your heart condemns me all the while. No—that is not forgiveness—that is not forgiveness, Bella. By all that is sacred!—I swear!—you—and you only—"

"Hush, hush! For shame—for shame! This may no longer be. That is not the language of fond brother to fond sister. If I ever indulged a hope, beyond what duty and reason sanctioned—yes, Cecil, duty and reason;—it is past for ever! 'Twas a sweet delusion; and no more. Nay, I tell you—that the scales have fallen from my eyes. Your own hands—and Oh! how I thank you, how I bless you for it!—have restored my lost sight; and now we can see, and know, and love, and *esteem* each other as fond brother and sister ought. Isn't that joy for us both sufficient?"

"Will you hear me?" implored Cecil. "By heaven, then!"—

"No, I will not listen, if you talk so. Talk to me as loving brother talks to loving sister," interrupted Bella, with a calm firmness that made the heart of Lord Fitzherbert pulsate some beats slower, as the words fell solemnly from her lips; "and I will listen to you for ever. Be to me—and no more—what your dear mother; and my mother, too, as well as yours, Cecil, at this moment believes you are,—and what has passed shall, by me, be for ever forgotten; and nothing

this heart and these hands can do to promote your happiness, your true happiness, as fond sister should promote the happiness of her brother, shall you ask in vain;—but—and think not I say it in anger—Oh no!—far, far from that!—by word, or by gesture, force me ever again to think that you forget what is due to yourself as well as to me; and that instant I sever for ever the link that has bound us so long and so lovingly together; though I tear my heart asunder with the effort. And now — for my head-aches shockingly this morning—come—pour me out a cup of tea—there's a good boy; and yourself one, too—to keep me company."

"I must obey you implicitly in all things, I suppose, however tyrannical, to-day," said Cecil, submissively, and pouring out the tea;—"like a naughty boy; not a good one; no, no—who has been let off whipping by his kind schoolmistress, on promise of better behaviour for the future."

"But not, who must have the sound whipping after all," smiled Bella, spite of the load at her heart; "before he will take warning and give up his naughty tricks, I hope? No, no—I have better hopes of my dear foster-brother; he is not such a bad, incorrigible boy as that."

"No, see if he is!—he will kiss the rod that corrects him, that he will!" exclaimed Cecil, ratifying the treaty of peace, by snatching the forgiving hand ex-

tended to him again to his lips, and making a profound bow; "and, thus having made, in some sort, reparation, he may come out of the corner, mayn't he, and have his breakfast, if he can eat any, with his little sister?"

"So, they're gone to try for the great trout in the spinnie-loch," answered Bella, sipping her tea, and making an effort to be cheerful; "and Mr. Pemberton will carry off the prize again, I'll warrant, as you're not there; as he did—and where could your thoughts have been?—at Fernleigh Mill."

"Where were my thoughts? Oh! I'd enough to do, I can tell you, to wait on Miss Annie," laughed Cecil, helping Bella and then himself to a wing of the guinea fowl;—"enough to do, to unhook her fly every other minute from the trees and brambles."

"A mercy, as Esther Lawton says, you did not get hooked, too," smiled Bella, playing with her knife and fork.

"Not once."

"Only the trees and bushes? And Aunt Gerty—how about her? I suppose Mr. Pemberton—he had enough to do, too?"

"Not a bit of it. By George! she throws a fly splendidly does Aunt Gerty. It's the funniest thing in the world, though, to see Annie out fishing. Clermont does it to laugh at her. It's really amusing. You know how you used always to pitch

the cricket-ball at Richmond, when we played at high-catch? till you nearly put out old Richards' eye one day—don't you remember?—I never *could* get you to pitch it right forward. You *would* throw it behind you."

"And is that how Annie throws the fly—behind her? You must mind how you get too near her, then."

"You never saw anything so funny. And the best of it is, she is every bit as much pleased with her sport as sweet cousin Clermont himself. I don't believe—and that's the truth—if she hooked a fish, she'd have the heart to land him."

"No? Really? But you'd help her, wouldn't you? Oh, you clever anglers have cruel hearts enough for anything!"

"Cruel hearts! Now, call you that cruel, sweet sister?"

"For the mere sport of it, yes, horribly so! sweet brother."

"You do not rightly distinguish, sister Bella."

"Between what? Ah! the common butcher's ruthless stab, eh, brother Cecil; and the tenderness with which he sticks his own pet lamb? No, I cannot. Or, rather, I should say—for there's the plea of *utility*, perhaps, in that,—rather, the bungling brutality with which Adam Roots sets about his work; and the scientific gentleness of your gentle

disciple of sweet Master Isaac, who tortures his victim with so much grace and address, that it would be the height of ingratitude even to wince under it."

"Ah—what—how mean you, sweet sister Bella? There is an under-current, methinks, running beneath the placid surface of that shrewd remark, that goes beyond the poor scope of simple brother Cecil to plumb the depth of. I pray you, take pity on poor brother Cecil's simplicity, and condescend to enlighten his sad dullness;"—but the entrance of a footman, to tell his Lordship there were two men, apparently petty farmers, in the hall, who wished to speak to him, breaking in on the *tête-à-tête*, much to Bella's relief:—"confound it!" said Cecil, rising, "they won't let me alone. Some more of them, I suppose, after the Stoneley farm. Arnold Webster's not half alive. Don't wait, Bella; I'll be back presently;" and, following Lambert,—"mind, this is the last application I'll attend to this morning," said his Lordship, petulantly; "show them into the library, and tell my mother, Miss Gordon's alone, and would be glad to see her."

What Lambert could have been thinking of, to call two such distinguished personages as awaited Lord Fitzherbert's presence in the library, "petty farmers," passes our knowledge to understand; unless it might be, which is just possible, that Lambert, never having been, till on this occasion, further

from London than Richmond, or Greenwich Park; in fact, Mr. Lambert being a regular Cockney, as any one with half an ear and eye could tell in a moment, by, as Adam Roots expressed it, 'the tone of his tongue and the cut of his calves,'—knew about as much of a countryman as we do of his holiness the Pope's real heart, by the reputation of his sanctity, or, as Mr. Jeames Lambert did himself of the veritable sayings and doings of the great Lords and Ladies, introduced to him every morning, over his hot rolls and coffee, by the Court column of the "Morning Post." If the two highly important personages alluded to, taking a calm survey of their whereabouts, and exchanging approving winks as they welcomed his Lordship's approaching footsteps across the hall, thinking better to pass current with Mr. Jeames Lambert, or for the joke of it, had a mind to personate Johnny Raws, never was there such a ludicrous mistake. Arnold Webster, who knew a hobnail as well as he did his own interests, would have detected the fraud in an instant; but Arnold could not be in two places at once. Arnold was in close attendance with Bridget Crofts on his Lady and Mrs. Lawton; and Mr. Jeames Lambert, seeing only two more pair of high-lows and gaiters, corduroy smalls, and velveteen sur-coats, and the house having presented a perfect *levée* all the morning of nothing but "clod-hoppers," as he irreverently ignated the Messrs. Giles and Stiles, naturally

enough made sure, they were "some more of those bumpkin chaps" come after the Stoneley farm; and that was all Mr. Jeames Lambert thought, or cared to think about it.

Not so Lord Cecil; a rapid single glance of whose more experienced eye, as he entered the library, sufficed to make evident, that he was "wanted" by the two "petty farmers" there awaiting him, on other guess work than the draining, and dressing, and cropping, and cultivating, and repairings, and rent-payings for the future, to please Arnold Webster, of the Stoneley farm.

"Farmers—petty farmers!" muttered Lord Cecil, confusedly to himself, and feeling the blood forsake his face, as the two "bumpkin chaps," with a half-bow, half-"morning my Lord," shuffled up towards him as he stood before them;—"d——n seize the fool!"

And really there was some excuse for the exclamation to himself, on his Lordship's part; considering that he had left his very agreeable *tête-à-tête*, on which he reckoned so much, with his foster-sister; and his nice cup of creamed tea and wing of guinea-fowl untasted almost; and, "say and do what he would—his mother would always have such d—d dull dolts about her!" Those couple of white-livered, hang-dog-looking, sulking, cowardly scamps there! petty farmers? O, the profanation! That bullet-

headed, bull-dog, bully chap there, with the half-grin, half-growl, that only wanted to be set on, to tear you down; and that crafty, cold-blooded, cadaverous animal at his heels, with those ferret eyes, hungry glance and shambling gait, brushing the brim of his napless hat with his greasy coat cuff—farmers, great or small—farmers, Mr. Lambert? O Mr. Jeames, Mr. Jeames—you *must* have been a cockney!

Yes, we repeat it, and repeat it emphatically,—none but a London flunkey, and a most flunkeyfied flunkey, too! could ever have committed such a solecism, as to mistake for two honest English farmers—"bumpkins" as Mr. Jeames ignominiously denominated them—a brace of thorough-paced scamps like those; who, on that lovely morning, with the blue heavens without a cloud, the birds sweetly singing, the bees humming, the brooks babbling, all nature basking in the very plenitude of mortal joy and thankfulness; when the souls of all living creatures ought to have been as light and unclouded as the skies,—had the hearts, with a couple of faces like those, in unison with nothing but roguery and rascality, to break in with their dirty errands on his Lordship's blissful dreams; and we are not at all astonished, knowing his temper, at his giving vent to his anger as he did. It was enough to try the patience of a saint.

Instinctively, Lord Cecil made a movement backward, as Ferret-eyes, sliding towards the door, left

Bull-dog free and fearless to advance to the attack; but, immediately recovering his self-possession, with the conviction of the utter inutility of the thought that for a moment rushed across his brain; he gracefully took the papers offered him; and, calmly ringing the bell, sat himself down, apparently unconcerned at a writing table, as if engaged in business—having first begged Messrs. Bludge and Slinks to be seated—till it suited Mr. Jeames Lambert's leisure to favour him with his appearance.

"Send Sam to me," said his Lordship, "and bring some wine and a sandwich."

The Messrs. Bludge and Slinks—"if all the same to his Lordship—would prefer a glass of ale."

Enter Sam.

"Take Di," said Lord Fitzherbert, having sealed and directed the note he had rapidly been scribbling but without the alteration of a muscle; "and gallop over to Linwood Rectory with this to Mr. Harvey. If he's not there; find him. Quick!"

Lady Edith put her head in at the door with her bonnet on; but, seeing the "petty farmers" hard at work over their sandwiches and ale, and her son, seemingly, in high spirits—by which she concluded that the right tenant had at last turned up for Stoneley, and knowing his dislike to be interfered with when it tickled with his whim to go to business, withdrew it instantly; and, Norton having brought down Bella's

shawl and bonnet, went out with Bella and Esther for an airing round the park.

More than three quarters of an hour wore away in pleasant chit-chat between his Lordship and his thirsty guests—the old ale working wonders on Master Bludge's iron heart; so much so, as to make him, with execrations on his own eyes and limbs quite superfluous on so short a friendship,—"wish the devil might seize him if he would hurt a hair of the head of any genlman, as knowed how to behave hisself as his Lordship did, if he could help it;" in which sentiment Ferret eyes cordially concurring; there is little doubt, had Lord Fitzherbert been wide awake enough, with a loose note or two in his waistcoat pocket, and Di saddled and bridled at command, he might have found a way of blinding the 'bums' without the humiliation of sending for Nugent Harvey. In fact, some such thought was beginning to dawn on his Lordship's imagination, when, as Bludge for the second time was rather impatiently drawing out his old double-cased silver hunter by its steel chain from his fob, and Ferret-eyes—the ale all gone—was getting evidently fidgetty about somebody or something outside,—the welcome sounds of Di's canter up the drive again brought the life-blood to his Lordship's cheeks; hardly two minutes after which open flew the door,—and the Friend in Need, just in the nick of time—and not

for the first time, either, Cecil Fitzherbert's conscience told him—breathless with the haste he had made, appeared upon the scene.

"How is this?" asked Lord Cecil, hurriedly, and with a slight tone of reproach, as Nugent Harvey ran his eye over the writ. "I thought you had got time."

"I am as perplexed as you are," replied Harvey, *sotto voce*, and biting his nether lip. "Palmer can know nothing of this. There's some foul play here."

"What's to be done?" said Cecil, impatiently, and glancing anxiously towards the door, as he heard his mother and Bella's footsteps in the hall.

Nugent Harvey again looked attentively at the paper. "Deuce take em! Twelve thousand nine hundred and eighty three. Dash me! if I hardly know—what is to be done."

"How the devil did they know that I was here?" asked Cecil, under his breath.

"How indeed!" echoed Nugent Harvey. "Confound them! what is it they won't know though, if they have a mind? Better here, though, a precious sight! than at Marksbury."

"Can't some arrangement be made?" proposed Cecil. "If they'd only given time. Deuce of a nuisance, isn't it?"

Mr. Bludge again looked at his watch; while Ferret-eyes, taking up his hat from the floor, was as fresh and fidgetty to be off, after the ale, as an old raw-boned, spavined post-horse full of beans.

"What's to be done?" repeated Lord Fitzherbert, with the slightest trembling of the lip. "I must go, I suppose?"

"Go! The devil a bit! if I can help it," cried Harvey, slapping the table; and, drawing his pupil aside;—"Your mother, my dear Cecil, must know of this. You would rather not? So would I a great deal! but it can't be helped. It would never do, anyhow, to see you lugged away to Roxberry gaol this heavenly day. Stuff!—that's all very fine. You don't fear—who does? But what would Annie Lawton think? Nonsense!—You know what I can do—I will. Devilish scurvy? It is! If they'd only given us time as you say. Like that Blitton Hawksby. Pity rather—you didn't attend to it directly I wrote. Palmer did all—I'm confident of it—that he could. Yes, that Isaacs and Blitton Hawksby are devils incarnate! when up, to deal with. In with them—get out, if you can, that's all."

"*In*? Not the slightest wish, I assure you," smiled Cecil—his eyes on his boots,—"that is—if I can keep *out*. But it'll upset my mother entirely—that's the devil of it!"

"It would upset her much more, I imagine," replied Harvey, grasping an arm tight,—"to see you marched off by our friends here to Roxberry to day. Rather an unpleasant upset that for us all, by jingo!"

"But," demurred Cecil, his eyes sparkling afresh and his chest heaving, spite of his dutiful compunctions, with the flash of renewed hope that the thought inspired, of his mother's ability, somehow or other, to save him,—"how can she do it?—how is it possible? She hasn't, that I know, the ready money by her just now—she's short—she told me so."

"As far as that goes," said Harvey; "that might be arranged, I think. Our house would do it, I've no doubt. They'll take bail. Her bond would be sufficient. All we want is time. There'll be a rich haul from 'The Vein' soon—she would hardly feel it. It's a deuce of a bore, I know—a confounded bore! But so's Roxberry gaol this delicious weather."

"Is there no other way?"

"None, that I see. They're devils!" whispered Harvey—"those Jew fellows, to deal with."

"It'll upset her, I tell you, as sure as fate."

"Depends much on how it's managed. The other would undoubtedly! — Ah! — lucky — there she is, with Adam, going into the conservatory.—

Yes—of course—I see—yes, yes—leave it to me—don't fear—I'll be back again in five minutes."

And so Nugent Harvey was; and with the calm satisfaction that conscious self-power so pre-eminently affords beaming in his handsome face.

"Thank Heaven!" said he, nervously grasping his pupil's hand, "that's settled!"—And, requesting Mr. Bludge's kind attention—in less than another ten minutes, the heart of Cecil Fitzherbert was, for all that Messrs Bludge and Slinks cared, free to be light again, if it could, as the linnet's outside, thrilling its noonday jubilations in the hawthorn hedge.

"And my mother?" enquired Cecil, anxiously, and again grasping in his the offered hands of his dear tutor, as the door closed on Ferret-eyes and his hideous leer.

"Bore it heroically! exclaimed Nugent, his throat full. "A little cut up, of course. Cecil—she's a mother—hang me, then, if she isn't!—" and Nugent Harvey gave way for a moment—Nugent Harvey was but mortal man.—"She's a mother—a mother—that she is, Cecil—a mother of a thousand!"

"She is—she is!" said Cecil, taking out his pocket handkerchief, "How shall I ever repay her for all her goodness? And those other things we were talking about?—You think—"

"We'll see about those by and bye," promised

Nugent, suppressing a slight yawn, as Bella and Esther Lawton passed the window. "There's no hurry about them for a little while. Go up now to your mother. She's alone in her room, and wants comfort. That will be the best return you can make her to-day, my dear Cecil. The future is safe, I'm sure, in your grateful love and affection. I need not tell you how best to improve such an occasion as the present. Your own heart, for that, my dear Cecil, is the best instructor."

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MOTHERS AND SONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE TREASURE'S COST.

NUGENT HARVEY did not reckon without his host when he calculated so confidently and with preceptorial solicitude on his pupil making the most of the occasion with his doating mother. The pupil, herein, justified to the full the master's high opinion of him, he was well up to his work in the task he had to do, and he left him to its performance, perfectly satisfied that the result would redound as much to the advantage of the one as of the other; while—that nothing should be left undone—he sought Bella Gordon, lest intelligence it was impossible she could be long kept ignorant of should reach her in a way might be more painful to her feelings, and Cecil stand, in consequence, in a less favourable light than his affection could bear the thought of.

For a moment or two Lord Fitzherbert lingered,

with his forefinger and thumb pressed against his upper lip, at his mother's bed-room door; when, seemingly resolved, he knocked gently,—and "come in," in a faint voice, assuring him she was alone, a glance, as he entered the room, was sufficient to determine him as to the part he had to play.

Lady Fitzherbert was reclining on a lounge-couch, supported by luxurious cushions, with her left hand, which grasped a richly embroidered cambric handkerchief, hanging over the side. A beautifully tessellated sofa-table of divers choice woods stood close by, covered with the usual costly little curiosities Hancock, and Howell and James consider indispensable for a modern lady's comforts; conspicuous among which was a gorgeously enamelled writing case, that had, apparently, been serving a useful as well as an ornamental part that morning, and an exquisitely wrought gold-mounted smelling bottle within reach, to look at which was enough to restore the weakest nerves, let alone the delicious perfume it emitted every time its precious services were called into requisition.

Lady Fitzherbert had been weeping, as the dimmed eyes, and flushed cheek, and embroidered pocket-handkerchief sufficiently attested. But tears with Lady Fitzherbert were so natural, so part and parcel of her constitution, came and went so fast and frequently, hovered the slightest passing cloud over,

that, like vernal showers, Norton—and none more weather-wise in such matters than Dinah Norton—hailed them always as omens rather of brighter than of blacker skies, and thought no more about them. "A good cry will do her good" were words that Cecil Fitzherbert had been accustomed to hear so often in his life from Norton's lips, that at last he came to account his mother's tears pretty much as Adam Roots did the soft summer showers—as something positively indispensable of kind nature's own providing, every drop of which was "worth its weight in gold;" and, to judge by the frequency with which Lady Fitzherbert dropped the golden treasures, possibly she was of the same opinion, too.

As Cecil drew his chair to the sofa-side, and grasped the cold, hanging, passive hand through the saturated cambric—saturated he affectionately trusted rather with *mille fleur* than with tear drops—out burst the flood afresh. "A good cry will do her good," thought Cecil to himself, and, covering his face with his right hand, while with the other he retained his grasp of his mother's fingers, he sat, as if transfixed with grief, motionless, and without the power of utterance—till the good should come.

Lady Fitzherbert, though highly nervous, as they call it, was not so excessively selfish as most highly nervous persons are. While no one, within eye or ear-shot, was suffering but herself, she could be as

intensely egotistical as the most selfish sufferer on Dr. Chambers's nervous list; but let sign or sound of suffering from another make itself really seen or heard, and Lady Fitzherbert—else how could her jealous, exacting husband have loved her as he did?—had a heart brimming over with sympathy and kindness.

Still Lady Fitzherbert wept—and still continued Cecil to repeat to himself, "a good cry will do her good." But the *good* not seeming to result as soon as he expected, filial forbearance could no more—the torrent would no longer be controled,—and, fairly giving way, his Lordship, relinquishing his hold of his mother's pocket-hankerchief, sunk, overpowered, on his knees, and, again burying his face in both hands, sobbed aloud.

Had Nugent Harvey been but by, could he but have been witness of that suppliant form and contrite spirit, and how proud he would have felt, at that moment, of his pupil!

"My child, my child!" cried the frightened mother, forgetting, in her alarm for her only one, every thought of self, and throwing her arms round his neck; as, raising his head and gazing woe-struck into that doating mother's eyes, he fell heart-broken on her shoulder,—"my dearest, best, of treasures—my own first—my last—my only one!" and sobbed in concert.

It was a touching scene, that sobbing concert between doating mother and designing child, and bore its own touching moral.

Why succeed deceit and hypocrisy in this life as often as they do? Because of blind love—because of passion that has the mastery—because of pride—because of vanity—because of indolence—because it is much easier to say yes, than no—because the devil is ever at the elbow to answer yea for us, when we want the resolution to return him nay; and, thus, falsehood and duplicity add hourly to their vicitims, and the world wonders, angels weep, and the devil snaps his thumbs.

Well, indeed, had Cecil Fitzherbert improved the occasion as Nugent Harvey could have wished. "His own heart too surely was the best instructor for that;" and never had it come off more triumphantly than on that eventful day.

"Your ill-deserved goodness, my dear mother," said Cecil, as soon as his emotion would allow him to find utterance, "while it fills my heart with more love and gratitude than language can express, sends daggers also to it of self-reproach."

"Thus let me pluck them out, then, for ever!" returned Lady Fitzherbert, again throwing her arm round the penitent's neck, and imprinting forgiving kiss after kiss upon his cheek. "Yes—yes—I know it—I believe it from my heart—you will never give

me cause for sorrow more. O Cecil, my own child! what have I suffered for your sake? But this moment repays me for all—yes, yes—there—there's an end of it! Speak, speak to your mother, Cecil."

"The sacrifices—the noble sacrifices—your love—your untiring devotion—your boundless generosity have made for me," sobbed Cecil.—

"Are nothing—a drop as to the ocean! my own child," insisted the weeping mother, pressing her repentant one forgivingly to her bosom. "What sacrifice that I could have made—my own—my only one—my heart's best—my proudest treasure! would have been too much for the joyful assurance—how exquisite!—this moment affords me of your future happiness and welfare? Nay—they are tears of joy such as I never shed before. There—my heart is light now as a feather. So, go—there—there, then, —they're all dried away! Go, and join them down stairs, while I get these tell-tale eyes a little into order; and send Norton to me, for I wouldn't, for the world, Esther, or any of them, should see a cloud anywhere on our hearts to-day—of all days, too, this—and the Vicar our guest. Best not say a word to Bella, either, at present. Poor child! she's far from well. It makes me quite sad to see her! I'm so vexed I didn't insist on her seeing Chambers before we came down. She'll be much pleased, I think, with Nugent Harvey's conduct to-day. Leave it to me—that's

best—I'll break it to her when she's better. He's really a noble fellow! His delicacy in doing a favour is so charming! When he gets into his new house, you must choose him something handsome at Storr's —something useful, and will come, I think, gracefully. It'll be Bella's own fault, that I'm positive of, if she's not a happy woman."

"She don't favour his hopes, I'm afraid, as much as you could wish?" rejoined Cecil.

"So I've sometimes imagined. But that I attribute to her health more than anything else. A blow at St. Leonard's is what I greatly reckon on—for both of us. It would be a splendid match for her! He loves her to distraction—that I do believe."

"You really do?"

"Unquestionably. Or, you know, it wouldn't have my countenance."

"He has made no proposals as yet, you say?"

"To her?"

"Yes."

"Not exactly—no—not at present, I believe. But there can't be a doubt—not a shadow of one—with the slightest word, or look of encouragement—"

"She gives him no encouragement either, then—none?"

"You know she's such a strange girl! All heart, and, yet, so distant. If I were not sure she has a nature just the same as her dear mother's, full,

to overflowing, of love, and tenderness, I should say, to see her listless ways, she had no heart at all now—she is so altered!"

"Perhaps, as you say, her health?" observed Cecil.

"That's what I really do think must be it. We shall see what the sea will do. It always does wonders for me. But, now we're on it—I'll tell you what you might do—what I think you *ought* to do—it's a debt you owe—a debt of gratitude would come from you so well—better than from any one else a great deal—"

"Ah! what? You have but to—"

"Say a kind word for him in your own way—I wish you would—as no one else can do it like yourself. That would have more weight with her, I'm certain, than all the rest put together. You know—her happiness is my sole object."

"Poor devil!" thought Cecil to himself—Nugent Harvey standing full length before him.—"Bella Gordon's the heart to be won by proxy? Sunny prospect!"

"I can't tell what has come to her of late," continued Lady Fitzherbert. "When you were with us, she was all joy, and life, and so full spirits, and up to all sorts of fun and frolic! now, if she hears only his step, or knock at the door, she scampers away like a frightened fawn. It makes me quite angry with her sometimes; it's so different to what I was at her age."

"A sign she loves, if she runs away, isn't it?" smiled Cecil.

"If she came back again when coaxed—may be, not unlikely. But, nine times out of ten, there's no getting her back any how, for love, or money."

"O the artfulness!" cried Cecil—"the sex, all over. Would I despair of my coy fawn, though, for all that, if I were huntsman? Stuff! Hasn't she heard Nugent say fifty times—I know she has,—'he wouldn't give a button for the game he could coax with a crumb, to come and perch upon his shoulder?'"

Lady Fitzherbert smiled. "Well, well, *nous verrons*," said she cheerfully, going up to her toilet table—"time will shew. Still, I do think a little word—you understand—in your own nice way—when you've a chance—not as if on purpose—but just incidentally—just—you understand—"

"Yes, yes," said Cecil, pressing his lips again to his mother's cheek—"just so—you're quite right—leave it to me—I know—I'll take her to task—the little, simple, silly noodle!—never fear—Nugent Harvey knows, by George! how to catch his bird, trust him for that, without the salt upon its tail. But—yes, yes—you're right there—a word can do no harm—just so—leave it to me—what, indeed, could she desire better—what indeed?—By George! half-past two!—you'll be down, then, in ten minutes?"

What a present comfort under affliction to its

possessor is a hopeful, buoyant spirit, in warfare with this world's trials and tribulations! Lady Fitzherbert's was a nature that, with all her submissive sighs and pious resignations, in the feeling of *present* relief found its best solace. So that she could be relieved of the present pressing load, be it what it might, the past and the future seemed to give her very little trouble. Her best joy of life was the perfect enjoyment of the passing hour. Give her but that, and, with 'His will be done!' she left the rest to Him, sincerely believing, we admit, that, in handing over to Heaven all the rest, she was performing a very meritorious and quite sufficient duty. A very little would elate her, as a very little would depress. Excitement "killed" her, she said, and, yet, to a certain extent, it was necessary to her existence. She had been the slave of her nerves ever since the birth of her boy, and the doating indulgence of her loving Lord paralized any little energies less luxurious circumstances might have probably called forth. It had been the duty of her physicians and friends ever to be ministering to those nerves, to be shutting out from view, as much as possible, every dark page in the history of the past, every but the brightest spots in the prospects of the future.

The result was—as was inevitable with a mind like Lady Fitzherbert's—her joy, or sorrow of life was the time present; and, though the burden of Nugent Har-

vey's *tête-à-tête* that morning was a stunning blow, at first might well lay her prostrate on her sofa, bathed in floods of tears and *mille fleur* as Cecil found her, the immediate danger over, the dark cloud passed, the storm averted—no sooner felt she the certainty that the present had prevailed, that the crushing weight of the impending peril was removed, that not a hair of her beloved one's head was injured, than the reviving spirit breathed again, all the dark history of the past —and very dark indeed it once had seemed!—faded like mists before the rising sun, and Lady Fitzherbert, kissing away the tears of penitence and amendment from the prodigal's pensive cheek, would have deemed more than half her wealth well spent for the assurance those silent tokens gave her of a cloudless future.

She had given her bond to her banker, only half an hour before, for twelve thousand nine hundred and eighty-three pounds, in addition to how many other bonds wrung from her by the like hopes at various times passed, we are not curious to inquire. But what of that? It was a feather's weight in comparison with the sense of the load removed. "His will be done! Thank God! she had the power given her to remove it, or what would have become of her with her poor nerves? What poor needy creatures did—for she supposed they sometimes suffered with their nerves as well as the rich—she couldn't tell.

Perhaps they did'nt feel troubles so keenly—perhaps constant familiarity with them blunted their finer feelings. Nervousness and no money must be dreadful! Yes, the poor were much to be pitied! and the rich had a deal to be thankful for! But in that, as in all things else—His will alone be done!

That Lady Fitzherbert was sincere in this there is no doubt. What, indeed, would have become of her, with her poor nerves, had she been the "poor thing" her heart sunk at the very thought of? And, if she felt the gratitude her words implied, no wonder, at her overflowing joy that day!—a joy which, diffusing itself in all directions, and communicating with everybody and everything within her reach, sent such a thrill even through Arnold Webster's iron soul, that Adam Roots, spite of the rheumatism, could have danced, and skipped for joy and Bridget Crofts, to keep him company, gone through a minuet, too, with Mr. Lambert, if Mr. Jeames Lambert had only known the step. Even Harry Block, the butcher's boy, got a large lump of pudding from the kitchen, and, from Adam, a bunch of beautiful tulips for his pony's bridle; "a pretty sure proof," as Nugent Harvey said, smiling to himself as he watched Harry munching his prize as he cleared the drive—"a pretty sure proof of the truth of the old aphorism—'it's an ill wind that don't blow somebody good;'" with which grateful *placebo*, wherefore should not Nugent Harvey have

enjoyed the fruits of his hard earnings, too, that day, as well as Harry Block?

While Cecil had been "improving the occasion" with his mother, the Friend in Need had left nothing undone that the occasion required with Bella Gordon; and never had he taken greater pains, with, seemingly, less of effort, in the performance of his part in the little domestic drama than on that occasion.

But the master had a far more difficult part to get through than the pupil.

Bella had a heart as well as Lady Fitzherbert, and a fond one, too, and nerves to give it play, as intensely susceptible, though differently strung. But Bella had, though passionate, a nice sense of truth, and a discriminating judgment; and, great actor as he was, hard as he had studied, and well applied what he had learnt, Nugent Harvey found it a much easier task to play to Lady Fitzherbert than to Bella Gordon.

"What am I to understand, then?" asked Bella —Esther having, in that charitable spirit we suppose which does as it would be done by, found a pretext for slipping away when Nugent Harvey joined them, thinking, probably, that, in such cases, two were good company, but three none,—"what am I to understand?" asked Bella—the first shock of Cecil's danger yielding somewhat to the assurance of his perfect present safety—"your house, you say, advances the money to Lord Fitzherbert?"

"Yes."

"That's kind. On what security? You know what a little woman of business I can be?"

"The same as the last."

"Poor Castlemore! Must be pretty well already overcharged?"

"In the market, perhaps—yes. Among friends, I'm in hopes—I think I may say—it can—it shall be done."

"If not—how then?"

"How then?—Don't alarm us both, pray, by such a question."

"It is possible."

"It *shan't be!*"

"That's a comfort! But—frighten you?—Why should *you* be frightened?"

"I may plead guilty, I hope, to having some feeling for myself *this time*," replied Nugent Harvey, appealingly, "without standing lower, I trust, in your esteem?"

"How?—Incur *you*, personally, any risk?"

"Literally, *de facto et de jure*, as the lawyers say, for every shilling. *In foro conscientiæ*—you are Latin scholar enough for that, I know—none whatever."

"A comfort again that. Yes, I see. Lady Fitzherbert takes the *de facto* and the *de jure* part of it, that's it?"

"Without which, Messrs. Bludge and Slinks," re-

plied Harvey, "would hardly have been satisfied, I'm afraid, to leave us in possession."

"Just so. Fair enough. And, I'll warrant, she would deem her *possession*, poor thing! bought cheap—don't you think so—cost her what it will?"

"*In foro conscientiæ*, she ought not ever to be the loser of a sixpence."

"*In fact*—her mother's heart has just cost her twelve thousand nine hundred and eighty-three pounds, you said; which, added to the other little love-bonds at Saints and Angels, makes—let's see—how much, to go to the accounts, some day, of the *in foro conscientiæ?* Dread tribunal that of conscience! if all the just debts due to it had to be paid in full. And that's not all, by a great deal, is it? There's more yet to go down to the score of conscience?"

"What else there may be," replied Nugent Harvey, slightly colouring, "need not hang very heavy on us, I'm inclined to hope."

"Maternal love is a rich *Vein* to draw from," sighed Bella, turning towards the house. "Poor, fond mother's heart! There needs an inexhaustible mine somewhere to keep pace, don't there, with these relentless drafts?"

"I'm in great hopes," consoled Nugent, "we shall soon have a rich co-operating mine to reckon on besides the maternal love—from which—"

"The Messrs. Bludge and Slinks, think you, will

have the courtesy to wait," interrupted Bella—a slight smile of derision curling her lip—"for the payment of their little claims and costs? If so, I assure you my faith will be materially increased."

"Reward me only with the assurance that I may hope for so much of that faith," was on Nugent Harvey's lips, "as may do this heart justice;"—when *Io Triumphe!*—what gladdening sounds of victory and rejoicing now come ringing on the gale—what beauteous form is that—borne triumphantly along amidst those heart-stirring shouts of joy and exultation? Can it be—or do our eyes deceive us—Annie Lawton? Yes, yes—it is Annie—it must be Annie—there are not two such as our Annie in existence! Welcome—welcome—joy—joy—joy—give honour where 'tis due—*vivas* long and loud for Annie Lawton!!!

And what modesty of air and bearing with that proud garland of victory round her brow! how meek, how unassuming, how truly noble those gentle smiles! what genuine, unaffected grace in every look and movement, worthy of true heroinism! And—make way—make way—what can that mighty trophy be on which all eyes are bent—borne by those two gallant squires so exultingly in advance? Mercy on us! do we see a-right—or is it the vision of other days that has been haunting us since the May-fly came buzzing about our brain and robbing us of our sleep?

What—the six-pounder in the Spinnie Loch? O, Annie, Annie—cruel girl! thus to rob us of our laurels. Six-pounder? Mercy on us, sirs!—six? Poh—it must be eight—yes, eight, gentle disciples all of good old Isaac—eight, we tell you—eight, if it's an ounce! Look at it! Well may the air ring with acclamations, and not a nook nor corner of old Castlemore but be echoing one *jubilate!* Well may the whole village round be going crazy like with wonder! Well may Adam Roots throw down his rake, and, rubbing his eyes, stand rooted to the spot! well may Arnold Webster's cold heart, opening, draw cork after cork, as if it were but water; and Bridget Crofts look in Mr. Jeames Lambert's estimation twenty years younger than she owns to; well may Sam, utterly forgetting himself, take advantage of the universal holiday, and get his sweet face slapped by pretty Hannah Chalcraft; well may the fever, running like wildfire through the house, at last call for Bridget's serious interference; and well may Lady Fitzherbert herself be touched, too; and, with Esther, running out, forget there is either a past or future in the fullness of the present; and Aunt Gerty, and Walter Pemberton—well may they stand so happy by, exchanging those unutterable looks; and Clermont, that day the proudest of them all, well may Clermont bless his lucky stars, and go on so saucily, as Miss Rosalie, whispering

in his ear, "don't I know what you're thinking of? give me a penny and I'll tell you," he bounds over to Annie, and, in defiance of all decorum, mischievously, as if that could hurt them, the simple noodle! brings the full-blown red roses all a-growing to her cheeks; and the Vicar, well may he, tearing himself away an hour earlier from his dear old friend—to find whom still so hale and hearty fills his brotherly heart with joy, indeed!—hasten to do honour with his own eyes and ears to Harry Block's exciting errand; and Bella Gordon—well may Bella think of her breakfast chat with Cecil, and of the cricket ball on the Richmond lawn, and of the trees and brambles, and how Annie, "if she hooked her fish, could never find it in her heart to land him;"—and Cecil, well may Cecil, however he may laugh it off, and give Miss Rosalie the tit for tat, wince under her impertinent home thrusts!

"Tut, tut! You talk indeed, Miss Rosalie? Do as much as that, then, if you *can*! *You* an angler? O good gracious! *you* go fishing? O ye gods and little minnows!—hooked him?—sure of that—quite sure? Pardon, I have my doubts. *You* know which way the wind blows? Nay, it's against all rules. Pr'ythee, do be advised. Nay, you'll never land him so—you play him much too long. You *will*—you say you *will*? Pardon—you sink lower every moment in my estimation. Indeed! Hooked

him?—oh, have you. Then land him, pray, by all means. Whatever you do — make haste — quick, quick! or you lose him for a thousand!"

"Highty-tighty there! my Lord. None of those airs! Don't *you* wish—yes—I should think so—you may hook her, too? What next I wonder? The idea of that. That's a good one! Don't you wish now—tell me—don't you—you may hook her—hook her—anyhow — let alone the landing? Oh, the vanity!—oh, the insufferable self-conceit!—oh, the lamentable blindness of some folks!"

But what thought or what said Nugent Harvey amidst all these joyous *jubilates?* Nugent Harvey had quite enough to do to listen and observe; and at Castlemore that abounding day there was ample food for his utmost knowledge-craving. What he learnt by it, to turn to good account, is known only to himself; but, to have judged by appearances, certainly if there was one countenance, then and there present, that bore in its every feature the index of a Christian heart — that countenance, watch and scrutinize it as keenly as you would, was Nugent Harvey's.

Among the many fertile phenomena of nature's handiwork this chequered life is full of for our instruction, none that bring with them more wholesome lessons, if we would but con them right, than the sudden phases of deep shade and dazzling light, and

vice versâ, that one brief hour of the same day will present. As after the fiercest storms come continually the fairest skies, after the most terrific tempests the stillest calms, let none say—in peace with their consciences — there will be no pleasant noontide oasis spring up for them in the desert morning of their darkest hopelessness. Some good folks have a wonderful facility of conjuring up these sunny oases under the blackest skies. How they do it passes the comprehension of less sanguine souls. Whether their *formulæ* may serve as a safe guide on all occasions is another matter; but, really, happiness, in this life, is a word, to suit all tastes, of such difficult definition, that it is cheering to contemplate any approach to it, in any feasible form, be it what it may.

We know an old lady, against whom we sometimes hold a hand at whist—for, with the utmost regard for us, we never could prevail on her to be our partner —when she counts her gains of a morning, how she hugs herself on our nice, little plump half-sovereign! utterly forgetting, dear, good, easy, oblivious old soul! the full change she gave us for it overnight.

And when gentle Lady Fitzherbert—that happy day after the departure of the Messrs. Bludge and Co., the storm blown over and the blue skies without a cloud—gazed enraptured on her treasure—"her

her own, her precious, best, her only one !"—the last thought, we may be assured, that troubled that doating mother's heart—and therein, we suppose, was to be found Lady Edith's favourite formula for happiness—was the vital question of that precious Treasure's Cost.

Who could have had the heart to remind her at that moment?

CHAPTER II.

THE MORNING CALL.

SEPTEMBER is come, and gone,—gracious, golden-gifted, glorious September! And Cecil Fitzherbert and Clermont Onslow have had their full measure of its ripest, richest fruits, pressed down, and to the overflowing. Lady Fitzherbert, intent on present hopes, is seeking new nerves wherewith to carry on life's consuming warfare at St. Leonard's. Bella, as she rambles restlessly through dell and dingle, courting the covert's shade, or braving the blustering breeze on shingly beach,—to drown midst sighing winds and ocean's roar the murmuring voice within that will not, do what she will, poor loving, lingering heart! be quelled. Nugent Harvey is spending his autumn holiday between Hastings and the pleasant country seat of Sir Felix Saints, near Tunbridge Wells, "improving the occasions" to the utmost of his power. Walter Pemberton has reconciled him-

self, after a philosophical struggle or two, to the 'charming-prospect-back,' as his laundress calls it, from his third floor in sweet Gray's Inn; and is hard at work on what, if the execution only equal the conception, must, inevitably, not only get him hung next time 'in sight,' but make Copley Fielding, and one or two others he could name, look about them for the laurels. The portrait, though still wanting the finishing touch, when it left the Parsonage, found a tasteful frame and glass as soon as it reached Gray's Inn, and occupies a conspicuous panel as you enter the studio, looking at you, whichever way you turn, with that extremely captivating expression "so attractive in the portrait of any one you love." The Vicar has returned to his "Cuyp," and says "he sees fresh beauties in it every day." Esther to her Samaritan duties, which are her delights, and which she declares—and we believe her—"she would not exchange to be made the first Duchess in the kingdom." Aunt Gerty to her village pets and pony chaise and *protégées*—and a deal of good in a quiet way does dear Aunt Gerty every day. Annie to Paul and Virginia, who "took her absence," Humphrey says, "so much to heart, especially Paul, that he really did think at one time he *would* have died!" and to "thank her stars, that the day is yet far off, she hopes, shall sever her from dear old Marksbury!"—a sentiment none shares at heart with her more than

Lucy Onslow, who—the picklings and preservings all over—has now time to get on with the new flower patterns for the dress chintz set—"to astonish them all some day when Annie has a house of her own, and heaps of admiring friends to come and see it." While Arnold Webster, Bridget, and the Rooks, nothing loath, have dropped back into the ordinary routine, glad, we'll be bound, if the truth must be told, to see the backs of "such plagues! as kept 'em in a regular fever of flustercation, Dinah Norton, Hesther, Sam and all, from sunrise almost, that they did, till come sunset;"—the only glum face being Harry Block's—poor Harry, above all things, loving pudding; and knowing, from experience, the hopelessness of looking, for twelve months at least to come, for mouthful in any shape from that little, tiny-curling smoke-thread sneaking out there from the eastern turret.

There, then—we had nearly forgotten Mr. Jeames Lambert! Mr. Jeames is quietly picking his shrimps with his ladies at St. Leonard's, and laying in a heavy stock of health for the winter season; though, to judge by Mr. Jeames' usual good looks, we should not have supposed he was a very great sufferer. It is the first time Mr. Jeames Lambert has seen the sea. It falls short rather of Mr. Jeames' expectations, from what he had heard Mrs. Dinah Norton always say about it. Perhaps Mrs. Dinah, in her enthusiasm, a little overdid it—in comparing its "roar unceasing

to a hungry lion's, and its waves to mountains high;" but, taking it altogether, Mr. Jeames Lambert thinks it "a rather pleasant change;" and, surveying his calves—the sea bathing "admirably conducive to muscular development."

There again!—zounds! there's no end to our obliviousness to-day. Just as we thought we had touched off the family portrait to a T, and, with our left eye closed, and our right getting all the world but ourselves shut out through our doubled fist, were starting back electrified with delight, as well we might! and puzzling our brains how to bring in, somehow, that little plague Rosalie Bainbridge, who never would be left out,—up she starts with her plaintive "can't you manage to find a little corner for poor me?" Oh, you little whining wheedler! Well, we suppose we must. Only have the kindness, gentle reader, to be patient for a moment. There, then—we've got her! Now, then, look, if you please—a little to the left there, in the background, where is a rustic wicket, you observe, near the patch of emerald turf whereon old Sancho is lying basking, opening on that delicious shrubbery walk all along the copse side. Isn't it the very nook of all others lovers would call their own? where the thrush, and the blackbird, and the nightingale, and the linnet, revel in sweetest melodies from morn to night? What see you? Rosalie herself! Isn't it the very image of her? Who could mistake

that plump, but graceful figure, those roguish brown eyes, that arch look, and pretty, pouting lip? Ah! and the old Beagler, too, beside her? What does he do there? Scandalous! to call him old, though, and hardly yet, as Mrs. Rodney says, come even to his prime;—what can he be doing there? O Huntworth, Huntworth! Is it—can it be—that you have a chicken-spirit under that sturdy breast, big and broad enough, one would think, to hold a lion's heart! or that, long-headed and large-hearted as you are—that little word *opportunity's* above your mark? What means that irresolute hesitation, and that timid side glance, as if Mrs. Rodney were coming, as you hold those white, delicate little fingers in your iron grasp? This time Mrs. Rodney is far off. And, think you, Master Thrush, there in the hawthorn, would be singing to you both that gleeful roundelay, if he thought there was any harm? O Huntworth! why perplex yourself longer with a doubt? Love you? Yes, yes—she loves you, honest Huntworth—else, wherefore rests her hand so patiently in yours? Wouldn't it be the easiest thing in the world to withdraw it if she wished, and say good by? Wherefore those downcast eyes? They would not scan the earth so closely if their thoughts were not elsewhere. Speak—speak!—O Huntworth, Huntworth! why trifle with life's happiness? Think how short it is! This suspense is dreadful! Speak—speak, we entreat thee,

speak—if but four words—only four!—and at once—oh, what a privilege!—you make happy—as don't every one know you wish it to be—as true, and fond, and faithful a little heart, with all its oddities, as beats in Marksbury! Aye, not even excepting Annie Lawton's, and that's saying a great deal; else, think you, we have not more respect for gentle Mistress Rodney's, than to throw it into half-mourning for the remainder of her days?

With their full measure pressed down and to overflowing, wherefore stood Lord Fitzherbert and Clermont Onslow, leaning listlessly on their guns that bright October morning in the ten-acre copse, as if they hadn't bagged a single brace there all the season? To have judged by Esther and Lucy Onslow's larders, they shouldn't have known a sportsman's care. But it's evident there's no perfect joy on earth—spite of achievements worthy of Hawker-immortality, clouded and cast down were the countenances of his Lordship and his loving cousin Clermont. How was this?

Dear reader;—at the eventful epoch under notice, there was a certain obnoxious individual you must know—you do already know, if you paid the attention to this little domestic story we are fain to indulge a hope you have—a certain *mauvais sujet*, or bad fellow, in plain English, living somehow, nobody exactly could tell how, in a wretched cottage

about a stone's throw from the road's side, between Marksbury and Fernleigh-scrubbs, ycleped Jem Shipton, or, more familiarity, poacher Jem.

It is an ugly name to go by, that of poacher; we know of none uglier in a rural district. It tells an ugly tale—a tale of idleness, and all the bitter fruits that spring therefrom. Hard, honest, healthful labour shrinks from it as from something loathsome. Even the rude peasant child on her errand to the harvest field, when asked whose cottage that was in the hollow?—with a confused stare of half-shame, half-wonder, was a minute nearly before she muttered out "Jem Shipton's," as if the words almost disgraced her little lips.

"Confound that Jem!" exclaimed Clermont, the thought of the single cock-bird that had rewarded their three hours toil that morning through copse and heather fairly getting the better of his temper; "we may pitch our Manton's into the fire, if something's not done to settle that rascal Jem."

"It wasn't Jem's fault, anyhow," smiled Cecil, "that we both missed that cross-shot, was it?"

"I've known the time," returned Clermont, taking off his hat, and throwing the thick chestnut curls from his hot temples; "we should have found fifteen brace in the ten-acre by this, and now look!"

"Let's see," rejoined Cecil, calmly "Wasn't it seven brace and a half we counted one evening—out on the feed in the barley field? I think so."

"Seven brace and a half!" cried Clermont, "what's that? I've seen double that a hundred times, before the first."

"I'm inclined to think," said Cecil, "others help themselves besides Jem."

"Ben says he'll bet his head it's no such thing," fired Clermont, knowing Ben was no favourite of his cousin's, who had more than once hinted a suspicion, that Ben was a precious sight wider awake than he pretended to be.

"Bet his head?" laughed Cecil. "Ben's always betting his head. No great harm if he lost it. Safe there—who'd have it?—any more than his master's," was on his Lordship's lips; but, curbing himself with that irresistible sweetness that he could assume in an instant when it suited him, and which had often given him the advantage in dispute with his more open-hearted cousin;—"I'll tell you, then, coz, what it is," said he, "we must provide Jem a better dinner than he can provide for himself, with all his covers; and supper, too, if needs must—and see what that will do."

"About as much, I expect," said Clermont, "as the Vicar's ceaseless exhortations, Mrs. Lawton's rum-possets, Aunt Gerty's pious tracts, and the soups, &c., *ad libitum*, from 'The Cottage' kitchen, whenever Jem's stomach's not too proud to send for them."

"The incorrigibles!" cried Cecil.

"There you're right, my boy. Good or bad treatment; well to-do, or want; plenty or poverty, it's all one to Jem. Feed him and furnish him to surfeit every day of the week like an alderman; and just as well, by Jove! hope to wash a blackamoor white, as root out the poacher from Jem's heart."

"And, yet, I'll bet, Jem wouldn't, if he starved for it, prig an egg from a hen-roost," said Cecil.

"My game is my own as well as my barn-door fowls," insisted Clermont.

"That's the question, coz. And, between ourselves, my dear fellow, a stiffish one rather to answer. Make Jem believe *that;* knock it, if you can, into his thick head, that he's, in fact, committing as scurvy a sin, cousin dear, in appropriating your pheasants, as he would be, like old Mabel, in purloining your eggs; rob poaching, cousin Onslow, of that chivalric spirit, part and parcel of its very nature, that dares and endures so many broken pates, and, bad as Jem is—providing, mind you, always a belly-full for him when wanted by honest means,—your pheasants, Squire Onslow, might henceforth, for all that Jem cared, roost every bit in as much safety as your fowls."

"Oh! if we're to wait for that," laughed Clermont, "for the right recognition of the sin, and the substitution of your honest means,—wish us joy of our good sport, cousin Cecil, when we get it."

"It's the only chance, nevertheless, for us that I see, cousin Clermont."

"But one, cousin Cecil. It's material—that you will grant I'm sure—to our credit, no less than to the fit and proper aspect at this season of the Parsonage and Cottage larders, that something should be done—if we are to pass muster only tolerably with Annie and Aunt Gerty, and pay for shot and powder. When the house is on fire, the best way, you'll admit, is to avail yourself of the readiest means to put it out; and, afterwards, consider at leisure, how best to avoid another flare-up for the future. I move, therefore—that, first, we put the extinguisher, in pure love, on Master Jem, by lodging him for the shooting season where he can do no harm—that's only charity; and, then,—we'll see what's to be done to turn his chivalric spirit into a nobler channel, if you please."

"Splendid! But I thought you didn't advocate prison discipline for poaching?"

"Certainly not, where there's the faintest hope of a character to be got, worth having, by any other means."

"You think Jem's chance of a social position, then, not very promising?"

"I think a good deal might be done, with right handling, for the son; but, for the old one, it's labour all in vain to waste a trial on him. He's

black ingrain. We've tried him twenty times. There's no good in him. He's a consummate villain, I tell you, without a redeeming point! It's the law, and the law only, can deal with Jem."

"And what can that do?"

"The first chance it has, nothing else—for any good—but ship him off. That's what it must, and will do, in the end. The sooner the better for him as well as us."

"Yes, the first chance. And when's that to come I wonder?"

"Before this day week, may be," replied Clermont, seriously, and proceeding with the reloading of his gun.

"Ah! that *is* quick. You don't say so? *Jubilate!* my masters all. What a *battue!* But how cousin sweetest, how?"

"You know. I told you how."

"*Diavolo!* you're joking now, gentle coz. Beard the tiger in his lair? Come—that's too good a joke; no—no!"

"You shall see—joke, or not," smiled Clermont. "Tiger or no,—by Jove! we'll have a tug with him shall prove this time who's master."

"Pardon!—your eyes glare—are you in your sober senses?"

"Do they? I've taken nothing, too, to-day since breakfast, but a biscuit and a pull at the cold tea."

"Please to stare me full in the face.—By George! not a wink. Extraordinary! And you'll come to the grapple—you will—with Jem?"

"Yes, sure as fate! That is, if he don't behave unhandsome, and bolt."

"Ah! true. If handsome—how then?"

"We'll treat him with the consideration due to a brave foe—send our own leech, may be, to mend the broken head."

"Ah, noble heart! Just like you! What'll you bet, now, he don't bolt?"

"Ten to one he will."

"*Mens conscia mali*, eh? You're right, by George! And how then?"

"Oh! have a run for it, no doubt, young Ben says. He's getting wheezy, the old fox."

"By George! do ghosts run, though?"

"Run? Bless you, yes, like antelopes—when they want—and have left their shrouds behind them."

"That young Ben's a sharp dog, by Jove! Can bite, too, as well as bark, can't he?"

"Can't he, that's all! And so's Jack Broughton, and Frank Blithers, I can tell you—regular bully bull-dogs, both of them, set them on in earnest."

"Poor Jem!—It's all up with him."

"Better not say a word to anybody. Jem's got eyes and ears like hedges and ditches. I'll get Aunt Gerty to run up the shroud, for the fun of it, when

Huntworth comes to tea some night. Drop a word to Annie, and you might as well go and put it in the 'Hampshire Herald.'"

"By Jove! though—if anything should happen. If by any chance—for you're such a peppery chap when your monkey's up," reminded Cecil—"if by any chance, you got hurt in any way—what on earth would Annie say?"—but, whur—whur—whur, within thirty yards,—and bang—bang—right and left, as the brace of long-tails fell toppling into the fern, drowning the "poh, pohs" on Clermont's lips—Master Jem had to make way for better company just then; nor did it seem needful to Lord Fitzherbert to make particular mention of his name again that morning.

Mounting Di next day after breakfast, to go and have an hour with his aunt, Lord Fitzherbert thought he might as well take Jem's cottage by the way, see how he got on, and what effects a little good fortune, falling to the lot of the wretched, had in soothing the rebellious spirit, and encouraging perchance to better deeds; or whether, on some soils, as Huntworth Lowndes expressed it, "as well chuck the wheat-seeds on his couch-heap there, and hope to reap bread, as throw away a grain upon them."

The first glance on entering the cottage sufficed to satisfy his Lordship that things were much mended with Jem since his last visit, as far as met the eye. There was even an air, comparatively, of comfort

around that spoke well for Nelly's housekeeping. Soap and water had been plentifully at work—a clean, fresh face was on everything. Betsy had driven a splendid bargain with the pedlar; and now there was not only a new, smart, shiny nankeen dish or two on the shelf, but a plate and mug all round, and one to spare for young Jem when he came home again. And Mike, the tinker, had made a beautiful job of the three old chairs; so, there'd be a decent seat now for his Lordship and the bailiff, when they came that way. In a word, things began to look a little more like what Nelly had been accustomed to in happier days gone by. Some fresh sand, too, was on the floor; the old tattered patchwork quilt looked quite ornamental again in the corner; a real bright brass candlestick had succeeded the beer bottle on the chimney-piece; a cheerful wood fire blazed and crackled on the hearth, over which the pot boiled and bubbled, sending forth fumes of most savoury concoction; while the sky-lark, in his new wicker cage, seemed unable to contain himself for joy, and sent forth such unmistakable tokens of heart-ease, that could young Jem but have heard him, he would have learnt a lesson in his captivity worth all the excellent chaplain's efforts put together.

Jem was alone when Lord Fitzherbert, having entrusted Di, as before, to his young friend with the horny little fist outside, entered the cottage. Nelly

was gone into Fernleigh, to buy a loaf and some tea and sugar; Betsy to Roxberry in Master Gosling's cart, to take Jem some clean things and a nice baked batter-pudding. Good food, and plenty of it—got honestly too—had evidently done wonders for Jem. It was easy to see, as he sat in his dwarf elbow-chair by the ingle side, with his legs extended indulgently over Jack, watching the pot boiling, and solacing himself during Nelly's absence with a short clay pipe, that he owed, like his betters, a vast deal more to the cook than to the clergyman. But good living is apt to make saucy as well as sleek, and there was a look about Jem, as he puffed away with the pot boiling, and a week's credit good yet at "the shop," that had in it quite as much of defiance as of gratitude. Curse and blaspheme awfully as did Jem at thirst and hunger, it never entered into Jem's reasoning to say a grace when plenty came. Jem's had been, pretty well since he was weaned, a haphazard life. Jem did not curse and blaspheme when he had plenty. He had smarted terribly in his time! and, come "a haul," as he called it, Jem put it to the score of his griefs, and still considered Providence his debtor; and, in giving the dark spirit a holiday within him, deemed he had done all that gratitude required.

Whether, had you made Jem Lord Mayor, he would still have been, in heart, a poacher, is a ques-

tion? We incline to think he would. It was in his blood, part and parcel of his very nature, palpable and pregnant proofs of which had manifested themselves before he was barely six years old. That spirit of poaching is a wide-spread root of evil, confined to no particular soil, or class, or order. It is a spirit brings greater folks than Jem Shipton into many trespasses. And, yet, see what pride they take in it, what honor-breaches, if not broken heads, they will encounter for it, and with none of Jem's excuses. His Lordship's poaching spirit knew no limits to its beat, regarded no rights, no pleasures but his own, respected no trusts, polluted the very hearth that gave him warmth; while Jem, with his red right hand, black ingrain as he might be, though he might have spilt his heart's blood for a wretched hare or pheasant, would have scorned to wring the neck of his Lordship's fattest turkey, had he been starving, and it had come roosting on his knee.

With a half-grin, half-grunt peculiar to him when on terms with himself, Jem bade Lord Fitzherbert welcome to his hearthstone; and, placing the best chair, and kicking "Jack" out of the way, re-seated himself with as little ceremony or concern as if it had been Mr. Winkles, the bailiff, had done him the honour of a visit, and, fixing his eyes on the fire, received his Lordship's congratulatory compliments on his improved looks with his usual grace. But,

this being a *tête-à-tête* with his Lordship of Castlemore and Mr. Shipton, as it turned out, of a strictly private nature, that not even Nelly was admitted to take part in; all we can hope, for the reader's satisfaction, is, that the next chapter may throw some light upon the matter, the only clue we can reckon on for unravelling the mystery—though why there should be any mystery, in a noble Lord making a morning call at a poor cottage, seems difficult to conceive. It is one of those things should not only face the noon-day sun, but glory in standing forth revealed to all mankind. Whatever fair glory may attach to his Lordship on this occasion, most assuredly he shall have every tittle of it as far as we can give it him, which is only just.

CHAPTER III.

THE TREASURED TOKEN.

WHILE Bella Gordon was seeking solace for a wounded heart in ocean's murmur and covert's pensive shade at St Leonard's, Cecil Fitzherbert was finding it among the green glades and purple heather of old Marksbury and Fernleigh.

Since his return from Castlemore, a weight had disappeared from Lord Fitzherbert's mind that raised Esther's quinine mixture to a higher pinnacle than ever; and proud enough, as may be supposed, was Esther at such indisputable evidence of her skill. The Castlemore visit had done "wonders," too, for Cecil. Care is a sad canker-worm for which there is but one cure, and thorns indeed had been Blitton Hawksby and Mr. Isaacs in his Lordship's bed of roses for many a day past. The immediate pressure removed, Lord Fitzherbert, like his mother, trod on air. He looked not back. "Retrospects, nine tenths

of them," he would say, "were not worth the trouble of turning the head over the shoulder to gaze twice upon." The prospect in view was all that life had to give, worth a serious thought, to Lord Fitzherbert. *Dum vio vivam*, though not the motto on his plate and carriage panels, was inscribed, large as life, on every thought and action of his Lordship's life—a rather paradoxical commentary, by the bye, to the *stern* heraldic virtues handed down to him by his ancestors.

And not only did Lord Fitzherbert congratulate himself on his agreeable deliverance from Blitton Hawksby and the Jews, but on the gratifying release he had experienced from a thought—though in another way—that no less troubled him,—his *duty*, as he called it, to Bella Gordon.

Chance does certainly seem very often to throw opportunities most opportunely in the way of bad men, which it denies to better folks. The devil knows very well how to bait his hooks, leave him alone for that; and, so that his victims do but hang themselves in the end, grudges no length of rope.

The result of the Castlemore *éclaircissement* between himself and Bella, though mortifying in one sense to his Lordship's feelings, had so far its solace, that the "debt of *duty*" on that score now pressed as little as Blitton Hawksby's—a great comfort! and left him free to open an account with Annie Lawton, if she would only give him credit. That he had

loved Bella could just be granted on the ground that she stood first on the list of passion; and, had no other divinity in the form of woman come in the way, more appeasing to his reason, or more piquing to his self-love, Bella, probably had known no rival in Lord Fitzherbert's heart. But Bella with her own hand had sponged out all existing obligations, and what was to hinder him carrying the new score when and where he would?

That Annie was no party to the contract mattered little. Lord Fitzherbert had his own consent. What more was needed? Where Lord Fitzherbert had a mind to bestow his smiles, how could there be a frown? The world and all it contained was made to amuse his Lordship. When asked one day, "how he liked the French?" "Very well—they *amuse* me," said he. Be the balance against his Lordship what it might, he was always the creditor, not the debtor. His Lordship lived but to be *amused.* Society literally melted under the obligations it was under to his Lordship. If his Lordship ate—it was worth a full month's wages to his *chef;* if he dressed, his tailor's fortune was as good as made; if he rode or walked abroad—beneficent the soil he trod, the air he breathed; if he danced—the fiddles and the fiddlers leaped for joy; and, if he made love—O Annie, Annie! what ought to have been thy grateful raptures, Annie Lawton?

The score, therefore, with Bella wiped off, and the

coast made clear, it only remained for his Lordship to "improve the occasion" to the best of his power, and establish the new credit with all convenient speed. To resolve on any thing, with his Lordship, was—if within the scope of possibility—to effect it, be the cost or consequences what they might. If fair means availed, well and good; if not, it was the perversity of fate that called for foul. Trouble bored his Lordship exceedingly, but the non-attainment of his end bored him a great deal more; and, if fate *would* be so cruel, he had a *duty* to perform—the *duty* due to *Self!* and that, in his Lordship's mind, was paramount to all.

Let not the evenest temper say it is proof against vexation. It is surprising what trifles will cross and anger the most sensible and serene of us. But four things, seemingly, could draw exclamation of real impatience from Clermont Onslow,—a lie—cruelty in any shape—under-done meat for dinner—a hot-headed dog in the field—and undue encroachment on his manorial rights. In all else, reason had but little to complain of. It certainly was rather trying to an eager disciple of "The Colonel," to come home day after day almost empty-handed—Annie and Aunt Gerty all expectation, too,—and that Jem carrying off the long-tails and the laurels; and great excuses were to be made, if, out of all patience—it was enough, and that's true, to have almost "tried Job himself,"—if, out of all patience, poor Clermont could stand it no longer, but gave vent, in his wrath, to a volley against

that Jem made Cousin Cecil stare again in good earnest, and declare, "by George! he wouldn't have believed, if he hadn't heard it, that such a spooney had such pluck in him."

Now, not a cleverer little woman in all Hampshire, put her to what you would, than Aunt Gerty. It was not, what could Aunt Gerty do, but what was there she could not? And it was not only to do a thing, with Aunt Gerty—whatever she did Aunt Gerty did it well. Any body can do; but to do well is quite another guess sort of a matter. And this might be the reason why, though always busy about something, Aunt Gerty was never in a hurry. What she did, she did well, while she was about it; and, once done, there was an end to it, which saved a deal of trouble. But, then, she had such a head on her shoulders had Aunt Gerty, and such a good heart to set it working! and such an eye, such judgment, such decision, such patience, such a persevering spirit! The opportunity was everything in her hands; nothing escaped her; nothing she undertook, though at first it might baffle, ever beat her in the end. It was admirable how she clutched, and realized an idea; how artistically she set about her work; and with what skill and ease she turned it out of hand! But, "little wonder" as she was;—who or what ever made Aunt Gerty a perfect *modiste* of ghost *toilettes* utterly passes our dull comprehension to understand at all.

It must have been something more than her brother's talent, or Esther's method that made Aunt Gerty the "little wonder" that she was. Talent and method can do great things, but they must have native genius to make an Aunt Gerty. And there Walter Pemberton was quite right—Aunt Gerty *was* a genius! and one of that rare sort of geniuses, too, the industrial, moreover. For who but a genius of class number one could ever have turned out, at a moment's notice, such a suit complete as—for ready money in the shape of a bran new pair of white hand-reins for Tom and Jerry, the bargain between them—met Clermont's eyes, hanging on a peg behind his door, when he returned that afternoon from shooting, we should like to know?

"Bravo!" cried Clermont, delightedly surveying his treasure, and shouting out to Cecil to come and see;—"bravo, my boys!—now, come Tuesday, and we'll see who's master!"

"Why Tuesday?" asked Cecil.

"That's Jem's night, don't you know? Young Ben's wide-awake. There's to be a grand "haul" on Tuesday night—all serene—after 'The Grange *battue.*'"

"And you really mean?"

"To bring down Master Jem? Yes—*Deo Volente*—as sure as that's a gun, dear cousin Cecil; or what a waste of calico, by Jupiter!"

Chance does seem astonishingly to favour the wicked in this world very often. Up rose the moon over Thorney-brakes, on Tuesday, in a manner must have made Jem chuckle. The night seemed made on purpose for him—the spirit of poaching was in the very winds. The grand *battue* had come off gloriously in 'The Grange' coverts and the "Ten Acre," and all along the Fernleigh spinnies were full of game. Young Ben, as Clermont said, had had his eyes and ears wide open as well as others. The haul would come off, too, that night as sure as fate, and Jem wouldn't go single handed, leave him alone for that. Wherefore, Ben had provided accordingly; and, "so that the odds were fairish, and Master Clermont didn't spoil it all—it wouldn't hurt Jem a bit to take a walk next day to Roxberry and go and see his son." To make this all the more probable, Ben had secured the co-operation of two pair of stout trusty hands besides his own—putting Master Clermont's more delicate twain entirely out of the question;—and now—"the wind just help a bit"—it only remained for Ben and his boys to be true to themselves, and each other—and "Jem's lease was as surely up, as two and two made four."

All Cecil's entreaties to be admitted to a share of the laurels were in vain. Clermont was a glutton! and, like Charlie Ferrers, would have all the glory to himself. Besides, "if the Vicar got an inkling, as

well go and cry it along Fernleigh common. No suspicion would attach to his, Clermont's sleeping the night at "The Cottage;" but it would put Aunt Gerty up in a moment if they both of them stopped out. Fiddle-de-dee about the danger! Three pair of honest hands not enough in all conscience to do Master Jem's business, bring as many as he would? He'd see! Cousin Cecil might go to bed, and sleep as sound as a top, and get himself up for next day; for, by Jove! the 'Ten Acre' was 'chuck full as it could hold!' Ben said."

Still and unbroken as the sleep of death fell midnight over old Marksbury and Fernleigh. Nor hoot of owl nor honest watch dog's bark woke up an echo in all Thorney-wold. Silence reigned profound; the very air seemed to stand stock still; the crackle of a dead leaf might have been heard by ears awake almost from one end of the "Ten Acre" to the other.

Twelve—one—and two had Fernleigh old clock added to Time's reckoning; and, as in Charlie Ferrers' case, the little band of brave hearts in ambush in the "Ten Acre" began to half doubt whether, after all, Jem hadn't got wind off it, and given them the slip; when a low, cautious whistle, followed by the tramp of heavy footsteps, made young Ben prick his ears again, and sent the blood rushing from Clermont's cheeks to his heart, and back again, quick as lightning for a moment; as Ben, reconnoitring from

his peep hole;—"only four of 'em—that's convenient," whispered in an under tone. "Now, then, Sir—" to Clermont—"now do be advised! This here job's not for the like of a pair of gen'leman's white hands like them's. Leave 'em to we, and the dogs—us'll do it—you'll see—easy as one o'clock. Bless you! come the ghost agin over Jem—clean useless—there then—as my old hat on a pole to frit away the blackbirds from the gooseberries."

But Clermont had no mind to be put down by Ben, indeed, after this fashion; and, desiring him to hold his tongue, and, at his peril, keep quiet till he was wanted;—up rose her ghostship, as the footsteps got to within thirty yards of them, in a manner enough to make the best curled hair stand on end, and, drawing herself up to her full height, glided noiselessly into the path along which Jem and his mates were stealthily advancing; then, making a dead stop, seemed determined to dispute the further progress of the spoilers.

A loud shout, whether of welcome, or of defiance was difficult to say, greeted the "oudacious impertinence" of her ghostship. For a moment or two there was a mutual pause—each party staring motionless at the other, as if undetermined how to act;—when her ghostship, seeing it was no part of Jem's tactics to beat a retreat; on the contrary, that he only waited the right opportunity to commence the

attack, in defiance of all ghostly decorum coughed aloud, and, with a waive of the hand Banquo's shade itself might have taken pattern by, made a step in front, just as Ben and his boys, obedient to their leader's signal, rushed impetuous to the fray; when, clapping his gun to his shoulder, quick as thought, Jem took his aim—fired—snapped in two the neck-rod,—and down came her ghostship's head toppling ingloriously into the fern. Another loud shout of defiant triumph rang echoing through the woods.

"At 'em boys!" cried Ben, as Clermont tugged and tore at the calico to release himself from its folds.

"Strike! Devil seize 'em!" hollowed Jem, rushing furiously at the ghost; and, closing in deadly embrace, over rolled Jem and Ghost together, after a desperate struggle, grappling and gasping to the earth.

"You would—would ee?" growled Jem—by a sudden effort of his herculean frame getting uppermost, and grasping the short loaded bludgeon that hung by a leathern loup from his wrist;—"you would?" and, swinging it up—in another moment Lord Fitzherbert had been without a living rival in Annie's heart; when, having made short work of Tinker Tom, at the nick of time up came Ben, and receiving the blow intended for his young master, half way, on one iron arm, and using the other to terrible effect;—presently Jem lay prostrate and powerless at the mercy of his conqueror.

In the meanwhile Frank Blithers and Jack Broughton had not been idle. Frank, after a sharp tussle, had floored his man, and was putting the finishing touches to keep lasting peace between them, when Jem fell. Another minute, and Jack Broughton, whose left arm hung useless, must have given in, or got his *quietus* from the two "Thorney Cocks," when, seeing Jem down, and the Ghost, on his legs again, coming to the rescue, off sheered the "Cocks" fast as legs could carry them, leaving Jem and the Tinker to the compassion of their foes.

The rest was all easy enough. Jem, reduced to submission, had no alternative but to swear and blaspheme and curse his fate, and do as he was bid. And pathetic in the extreme, if we may believe young Ben, was the meeting next day between father and son in Roxberry gaol;—the "old un" declaring, in an emphatic phraseology peculiar to himself, the full force of which is much diluted by curtailment—"that he shouldn't ha minded it, not a mag, if he'd only ha' druv the soul of that limb, h— seize un! at The Cottage. But Jem was a-going out soon; and didn't he owe him one? and wouldn't he pay him, too?—yes, he would;" with which consolatory reflection, Jem, senior, reconciled himself to the doom next Quarter Sessions might probably award him;

and, getting pen and ink and paper, after several ineffectual attempts to please himself, at length achieved the following to his Lord and patron,—a rough copy of which having, fortunately for posterity, fallen into our hands, we are now enabled to give it *verbatim* for the reader's edification—just 'squared' a bit, as Jem would say, to make it legible:—

"Roxberry Castle.

To His Honourable Lordship.

Jem Shipton presents his respectful duty and hopes this'll find his Lordship nicely as it leaves me tolerable considering. Shouldn't ha minded it not a mag, if un had druv the breath that's all out of that limb—not if un had swung for it. But Jem owe un one doan't he? and he'll pay him leave Jem alone for that. It wasn't no fault was it of we two chaps? Let un get them Thorney Cocks in the grip agin; won't un cut away—see un do it doan't un? Never fear Jem. Jem split? Let un do it that's all. Scrag him—thof I'se his father. No—not Jem—rip his tongue out fust.

Hope his Lordship won't be offended neither; but ould give em a lift at Sessions with the Wigs and drop in when he's a passing that way and say a kind word to Nel and Betsy. And tell 'em to bear it stiff and mind be sure that Jack behave his-

self.—So no more at present from your Honourable Lordship's dutiful servant at command

JEM SHIPTON,
⋈ his mark."

Short and off-handed as may seem this epistle, it cost Jem no little time and pains before it was signed, sealed, and superscribed, with the assistance of a confidential literary friend at his elbow, to his satisfaction. When the day dawned for young Jem's departure from "The Castle," Jem consigned it, together with much sage paternal counsel, to his son's care, with strict injunctions to deliver it himself into his Lordship's hands. This Jem, junior, found an opportunity of doing the next day, leaving such a very favourable impression on his Lordship's mind, that his Lordship and Clermont had a long earnest conversation again before they went to bed on the old subject of The Poacher; and how they could best save young Jem, before it was too late, from the wretched fate of his abandoned father;—Lord Fitzherbert quite agreeing with his cousin, that their victory could alone be said to receive its crowning triumph, when they had done their duty to society, as some set off for the sins of the parent, by making, if possible, the son, at least, an honest man.

Jem's downfall and its result at Sessions—viz: fourteen years' change of air and scene at Govern-

ment expense, tantamount, in Jem's case, in all probability, to a life-long lease, had been a Government debt due to Jem so long deferred, that its payment in full, now affairs were wound up, was only a point of honour to itself that society demanded. Even Nelly refused not to be comforted; and, now that her boy was restored to her, and brighter prospects seemed opening for him on all sides, gave proof, at all events, that, however the wife had long since been but the shadow of a name with Nelly, the mother's heart was not utterly dead within her, as one that had no hope.

True, Lord Fitzherbert had done his best to comfort the afflicted. What money could accomplish, had not been grudged, as Nelly's improved *ménage*, and Betsy's smart new Sunday fit-out, to make glad her Jem's approving eyes, sufficiently attested. And his Lordship had had an hour's private talk with the magistrates, too, and dined twice with the judges at the sheriff's, and taken an amazing interest with his cousin, in Jem's case; so that, come what might, Nelly had this consolation, that nothing had been wanting on her part as far as in her lay, and, if go Jem must, the worst they could give him was fourteen years, and fourteen years was better than twenty-one, and, please God to spare him, she hoped yet to see him back again before she was quite an old woman; and if not, her prayers should never cease in his behalf. And when all Lord Fitzherbert's endeavours

could avail nought; when Sessions were over, and the parting scene came, and Nelly, clinging to the arm that—would we could say had never been raised in anger but in her defence—forgot in that bitter hour every thought but that he was her husband—her first love—the father of her child—the chosen one of many—whom at God's altar she had vowed, in joy, and in sorrow, through weal, and through woe, to cling to and cherish, "till death did them part;" never till that moment did Nelly realize the true meaning, the full heart-meaning signification of that holy word WIFE. Thoughts, agonizing thoughts of stunning consciousness could find no utterance, rushed through the burning brain—the vivid consciousness of time mis-spent—of precious gifts abused—and opportunities for ever lost!—and well it was, perhaps, for Nelly, as, that rugged hand was passed across that haggard brow, and, while yet a moment more was left, a hollow, choking voice whispered in her ear, "bless ye! doan't now—doan't now, Nel—we'll meet again, Nelly—doan't now—sure then—we'll meet again,—" that a tear, caught from Jem's cheek as he pressed his bloodless lips to hers, was their last farewell.

On that tear, day and night, for many dreary months, did Nelly think and dwell. There was a solace in it nothing else could give her. It spoke a language she had never heard before. It told "of happier dreams—of love—of tenderness—of con-

trition—of penitence—and—oh, dared she hope it?—of amendment, and forgiveness!"

And Nelly pondered that treasured token in her heart; till the spirit's carnal warfare over, came the last prayer on Nelly's lips,—and then—"sure we'll meet again," she muttered constantly, with upraised eyes and supplicating hands—"sure—sure—we'll meet again;" and, Heaven-hoping, passed to her account.

CHAPTER IV.

STILL, "SOMETHING MUST BE DONE."

Pleasantly as gentle breeding, tastes congenial, sound health, the wherewithal without stint, and the broad margin over for the luxuries of good-doings could make it, passed the winter at Marksbury old Parsonage.

But abounding in interest to themselves as no doubt were every day's sayings and doings of the little then world at Marksbury, quite as much as they are now, life at the Vicarage, under the most exciting circumstances, was far too uniform, we fear, to afford many incidents would, in detail, be entertaining to the reader. After awhile, and the sensation occasioned by Clermont's defeat of Jem and his gang had somewhat subsided—the very after contemplation of the perils of which, though her gallant boy under Esther's skillful hands had come off almost without a mark, and a hero, too, dubbed for the remainder

of his days, threw Lucy Onslow on a sick bed again—things fell by degrees at the Parsonage into the ordinary routine. Regular hours were appointed by the Vicar for reading and close study, and were regularly kept, Lord Fitzherbert's assiduity and fast progress quite surpassing the Vicar's most sanguine expectations, and gladdening Lady Fitzherbert's heart to such an extent, that not only was the Castlemore affair as good as utterly forgotten, but, or Nugent Harvey was mistaken—a thing hardly likely to happen—it would be his own fault alone if he had a care left, come the next grand lap-full from 'The Gold Vein.'

Hourly improved, in a word, Lord Fitzherbert the ripe occasions, and hourly increased the Vicar's pride and pleasure in his noble pupil. It was evident, as Lady Fitzherbert said in her maternal pride to Bella, "there was no want of ability in Cecil;" and, as Bella perfectly agreed with Lady Fitzherbert, as she scattered the rose leaves at her feet, "a regular system was all that was wanted; and, when his health was re-established, all the rest would, with his talents, be the easiest thing in the world with Cecil Fitzherbert."

Lord Fitzherbert realized, in short, to the full all their good opinions. Nor were his mother and Dr. Vaughan and his old Tutor's the only hearts by many that bore gratified testimony to his growing

greatness. Golden opinions seemed to follow him at every turn. For miles round not a cottage but rang unanimously with his praises. One day would see him the honoured guest of the High Sheriff or the Squire, the next by the ingle side of some old crone, brewing her a cup of tea, and listening with bleeding heart to the hardships of the poor. There was no end to his benefactions. Not the humblest home but bore some substantial evidence that his Lordship had been there; at every point the Vicar and Aunt Gerty found themselves forestalled;—" his Lordship has done this—and his Lordship has done that—this is his Lordship's goodness—and that is his Lordship's gift" anticipating them on all sides, go which ever way they would; so, no wonder at the Vicar's pride and pleasure in his noble pupil.

As for Esther, Esther Lawton had a way of her own of feeling pride, and of giving it expression, too; and we, who knew her well, can perfectly understand what must have been the extent of her joy in her noble charge, when on New Year's day, with glistening eyes, she presented him with a beautifully bound transcipt, written in Annie's fairest hand—the production of many a sly, stolen leisure hour—of the book, next her Bible and Prayers, she prized, we do believe, more than all the learning on the Vicar's groaning shelves; including the Rum-Posset and the

Quinine-Cordial receipts. That was a present—that precious Friend In Need—worthy of the giver and receiver—a present after Esther's own heart—that spoke volumes of home-truths—a mine of never-ceasing wealth—a treasure-house of gifts inestimable—of pearls beyond price—a panacea against all fleshly aches and pains—past, present, and to come; and great was the store Lord Fitzherbert set by it, seemingly, beyond all the rest of his possessions put together, as it became him well to do.

With Aunt Gerty he got on in a manner quite astonishing to see! But, then, who took so much pride in her parroquets, and little love-birds, and gold-and-silver pheasants as did he; who talked with her so long and so often about the Author-Artist; and on whose knee found Waddle, whenever so inclined, a softer snugger berth than on his Lordship's? Towards Clermont, what could consanguineal love and affection have desired more? And, as to a jealousy between them on Annie's account, had Clermont wanted that spur to keep him well up, poor Annie had taken very little, we imagine, by the move. Coquetry in any shape would have been thrown away on his Lordship; so, it was of no earthly use Miss Rosalie putting Annie up to this trick, and that trick, "just to tease and try him." All that might tell very well on Huntworth, though, as to it

bringing him to the point, there was that last chance at the shrubbery gate, not a soul but themselves within ear-shot—and how did that all end?

And, for Annie, if her love for Clermont daily increased, that was no reason why her regard for Cecil should one jot be lessened, so long as he deserved her smiles. It was not possible she could be ignorant—and, if she had been, there was one ever at her elbow would have pretty soon enlightened her —of the delight her society and conversation at all times gave him. She must have been insensible, indeed, to have felt indifferent to the respectful homage of that *noble* soul, the flattering attentions of that refined mind, the sweet music of those tones, the perfect grace and bearing of that model form; she would not have been woman, and not been conscious of a little corner somewhere in her heart loved admiration. But, then, it was shown in such a way, tendered so truthfully, so unpremeditatedly, so openly, and so respectfully, there was no resisting it. There was nothing to distrust in it, far less to alarm; Clermont himself might have looked on smiling, and said amen to every look and word.

And so, all hearts in harmony, happily passed the winter at old Marksbury's Parsonage house.

Again came the first promise of the young green leaf, and again, over Thorney-brakes, the cuckoo with

his welcome song, waking up copse and moorland from their winter slumber. Sweet cuckoo!

"Wasn't it pleasant to hear him sing
Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?
Joy and glad tidings it seem'd to bring,
And the sweet summer too as well as the spring,
That cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo.

Again came seed-time, with its busy hopes and teeming garnersful in prospect, again the season of honest industry, and its rich rewards in store, of happy harvest-homes;—and still lingered Clermont Onslow in inglorious ease at Marksbury.

Time after time as Tabitha Ludlam had dropped into the Parsonage bag letter after letter bearing the Gray's Inn post-mark and addressed to Clermont Onslow, Esq., full of golden precepts and examples would have honoured Plato; often as the Vicar, by Lucy Onslow's wish, had, renewing the old subject of the choice of a profession, dwelt on the dangers of indolence and infirmity of purpose; again and again as good Esther, with tortoiseshell spectacles on nose and knitting-pins in hand, had told startling story after story of superhuman juvenile achievements, always holding up the Vicar, or Lord Mayor Whittington, as her models of perfection; seriously as Aunt Gerty had twenty times taken him to task herself; Annie leant all the weight she could to bring him to his senses; and Cecil sat up night after

night, chalking out plans, and building castles up together almost to the moon; no end of times as the Squire had predicted; and Rosalie's patience was completely exhausted; and even easy Huntworth himself, "thought it was pretty well time he began to stir a bit if he ever really meant to be Lord Chancellor;"—still seemed the Woolsack to be going begging, for anything that Clermont Onslow cared about it.

It *was* "high time," as Huntworth said, "that something should be done." But still lingered Clermont; still in vain advised the Vicar; and Esther told her stirring tales; still continued the vivid Pemberton tableaus, enough to agitate a hermit, to set Aunt Gerty's wits to work, and Annie's little heart all in a flutter of hope and dread, to think how it was all to end; when one smiling May morning, when Annie in an exceedingly becoming new white-braided mignionette-coloured loose morning robe—for we like to be particular in such matters—made her first appearance at breakfast after a fortnight's visit at Roxberry, looking more beautiful than ever, and the odds against Clermont's long-talked-of Australian trip seemed every day getting greater and greater,—in hurried Cecil with a "Morning Post" in his hand, and, handing the paper to the Vicar, "there," said he, "by George! Sir, that takes the shine rather out of Dr. Kerr."

Esther let the woollen camisole she was working fall into her lap; Aunt Gerty closed the book she was reading, with her fore-finger on the page; while Clermont, opening wide eyes and ears, as Annie, turning pale as marble, peeped over her father's shoulder, drank eagerly in every word as the Vicar read aloud:—

"GLORIOUS NEWS FROM THE GOLD-FIELDS. ANOTHER MONSTER-NUGGET. BATHURST MAD WITH JOY AGAIN!"

"Lucky dogs!" said the Vicar, tossing the paper to Clermont. "It isn't *getting* seems the difficulty with them, is it?"

Esther "never knew a case but one, where easy come wasn't also easy go, and that was the case of poor old deaf and dumb Norris Stone, of Bonnington, that Betty Hornacre left the three thousand to last winter—that really was a blessing! Only look at that case of young Sydney Pipps, who drew the twenty thousand sixteenth with the Vicar,—by the bye, the Vicar's was another exception, that was true, she forgot that,—when they were boys at Winchester school together—that lottery prize was Pipps' ruin! There, he might have been worth his twelve hundred a-year, like his father, at that moment, and only think of the Vicar—it was dreadful!—seeing him one

day, with hardly a decent coat to his back, holding a horse in Curzon Street for sixpence."

"It was," agreed Aunt Gerty.

"Yes, and that case, too," reminded Rosalie, snatching the paper from Clermont, and running her eye over the fashionable *on dits*—"don't forget that, of—what was his name?—you know, Annie darling—whose father, don't you recollect, love, cut him off—and served him right, too—with the three meals a-day, that he mighn't starve outright?—plainly shewing, as deed could—his estimate of the gambling youngster—that was dreadful, if you like—and—mercy on us! what next?—here's 'a pretty kettle of fish!' as Mrs. Rodney says."

There was an universal pause. Even the Vicar lent a curious ear.

"What now, you little teaze?" asked Aunt Gerty, looking up from the page she was intent on.

"What now?" cried Rosalie. "Oh! the deceitfulness of this wicked world. Mercy on us! how sly we've been about it, too, to be sure."

"Ah—eh—sly? what—what about? enquired the Vicar, hitching his chair a move nearer, while Esther, taking her spectacles from her nose, laid them for a moment on her knee, we suppose to hear the clearer.

"Scandalous! now that it is," continued Rosalie, with an emphasis, and side glance at Lord Fitzherbert that brought the colour for an instant to his cheeks;

" or what dreadful, shocking story-tellers they must be!"

" Extraordinary very that!" smiled the Vicar.

" Out with it, do, there's a dear," entreated Aunt Gerty.

" 'We hear from undoubted authority,'" read Rosalie, with a semi-serio, semi-comic expression irresistibly amusing, and that made Esther's benevolent little grey eyes twinkle again with the fun. " 'We hear from undoubted authority'—undoubted! mark you, my Lord,—'that the lovely'—there, Annie, love, didn't I say so?—'and accomplished Lady Emma Sommersley, will shortly bestow her hand and large fortune'—isn't that nice?—'to which she succeeds by the will of her maternal Aunt, the late Lady Sophy Spodge—on'—well if that don't beat everything I ever heard of—oh the perfidy—the black ingratitude of man's heart!—you'd never guess if you tried till doomsday—'on'—of all men in the world—O, Annie, Annie! don't trust to them, don't believe a word they have to say—Mr. Clermont, it's no laughing matter, I assure you,—'on'"—and Rosalie's voice faltered.

"This is intolerable!" cried Cecil, making a playful effort, but in vain, to get possession of the paper; " absolutely cruel and unbearable, Miss Rosalie! Don't you see Miss Gertrude's sufferings? You can have no feeling—though, Heaven forbid!—no, no—it is quite impossible."

"Oh, the monster!" exclaimed Rosalie. "This passes everything,—'will shortly bestow her hand and large fortune'—the silly senseless goose!—'on'—there—there—look at him—the creature! there—and not a blush, or sign of one—'on' him—him—Lord Fitzherbert, of Castlemore—the wretch—the base deceiver!"

"Zounds!" cried the Vicar, jumping up and looking over;—"faith, and so it is in sober verity! And that's not all, good people. Hark,—'report fixes the ensuing spring for the celebration of the joyful event, when Lord Fitzherbert will take possession, *Deo Volente*, of his ancestral halls."

"How very obliging!" smiled Cecil.

Esther's brimful benevolent little grey eyes beamed again. It was a sad pity that Esther Lawton ever wore spectacles.

"We want words," began Aunt Gerty.

"Most fortunate!" responded Cecil, "as it happens."

"There he goes again," cried Rosalie. "This is intolerable! Don't believe him, Annie. It won't do. Oh! you see if I won't tell everybody. Sly, wasn't it? Take it to heart?—not we indeed! We want to be my Lady?—oh the vanity! Come along, Annie love, come along! And you too, Mr. Clermont—you needn't be cocking your chin so saucily—and but one remove. Come along, darling. My Lady, indeed!

A dear lot, either of them, at any price. What a mercy!" and, dragging Annie after her, in spite of Clermont's reiterated protestations and assurances, that it was no use their being in such a hurry, for Huntworth had got a bad cold and Mrs. Rodney wouldn't let him come out that day, Lord Fitzherbert was left to a *tête-à-tête* with the Vicar, to settle it about the Lady Emma as he could.

"Confound the fools!" exclaimed his Lordship to himself, after having, at length, effected his escape. "Some deep dodge at the bottom of that, I'll bet a hundred! Now they'll dun me like the devil again, by George! on the strength of the 'large fortune.'" For some moments his Lordship was lost in thought. "By Jove! a good idea," inwardly ejaculated he. "Improve the occasion always—turn the changes and chances of this chequered life to the best account you can. Most excellent maxim! good friend Nugent Harvey, most excellent! Yes, and well deserving our present grave regard."

Never man ever merited the thanks of his country more than Rowland Hill. We remember the time well when we used to pay our six or seven shillings a-morning with our post bag, with as little concern as we now stick on our penny stamp to our dear friends Smith and Brown, and, be it understood, for value quite received. We can fancy the sort of phiz, though, we should pull to-morrow, to have to find

eight-pence a-piece for such a score or more of letters as lay strewn on Lord Fitzherbert's table the morning after that just recorded at the Vicarage. And, yet, his Lordship only "confounded the fools!" and that, too, not for what they cost him in pocket, but, just then, in peace.

Tearing up and tossing the fragments into the waste-basket had diverted his Lordship some half hour or so, when up turned an elegant, gentlemanly looking little fellow of refined but modest aspect had got hidden in the crowd, evidently an old acquaintance, and, welcoming him with a smile—"Ah!" said he, "I thought as much. All sorts of honied things in store for me—how kind, how very handsome!" and, resigning himself heroically to his task, it was amusing to watch the varied play of his Lordship's features, as he read as follows:—

Hill Street, May, &c.

My very dear Cecil,

If all that our kind friends say of us were the truth, would there be more cause, generally, of joy or of sorrow for us in this deceptive world? I know your answer. It accords exactly with my own. Of sorrow far! Yet, how our blood tingles, and our breasts expand, how our heads look aloft, and our steps go light, if the world speak well of us! If it congratulate us *justly*—*Jubilate!*

How feel you this morning, my dear fellow, and your table loaded, I can fancy, with God speeds and good wishes? But that I know your plain sense and placid temperament, I should shudder for your wits to-day. Enough to turn a stoic's. Zeno, or Xenocrates himself had wavered under it.

We send you a "Post," though I think you said you get it at the Parsonage. If so, Miss Gerty's bright eyes, or Miss Rosalie's, or, brighter, eh, than all, sweet Miss Annie's will not be long in spying out *something to your advantage* under column twenty-four. It is so exciting to see one's name in print. You have need of all your philosophy. I can fancy the Marksbury commotion. How will you ever escape with that little bundle of mischief, Rosalie? Aunt Gerty's to be dealt with, but there's no managing that rogueish little gipsy. Miss Gordon would give a guinea, she declares, to hear what Annie says. We're all at our wit's end. Who can have been so kind? Your mother—though more pleased than vexed a great deal, chiefly on Lady Emma's account, she says, who is so sensitive, she wouldn't have had it happen for the world—is finely up about it, though I can't for the life of me see why, for she laughed as heartily as any of us about it last night at Lady Plympton's. And so did Howard Plympton, who came full-fig, and asked several times affectionately after your health. Talks

of soon changing into the Guards. Really, I never saw a fellow more improved; would positively be good-looking with a thought less self-conceit. Precious spooney, any could see that, on Lady Emma. Couldn't approve it at all, and so I tell you, with any less rival than Cecil Fitzherbert. Heard you had been on Chambers' list—were delicate—consumptive; but overjoyed to find it was 'all bosh.' She looked charming! quite *la comtesse*, as you used to say; magnificently dressed, and such an air! More than Plympton know, I'll bet—who's the richest heiress but one in England. And now shall I tell you why I judge Howard Plympton has no chance, no, not the ghost of one? We talked half the night about the Parsonage, and she never asked once, no, not once, as I'm living, about Annie. Don't that shew the girl? Charlie in high glee about it. Says he's going to write congratulations in his best hand, and tell you a bit of his mind. Taking again to tea and early habits. Never too late to mend. Has hopes, he says, still, of cousin Rachel. Poor Charlie! Confounded difficult old friend to shake off, that 'jolly nose'—disreputable old rascal! All drank your health last night at Club in Chablis. Countless, my dear Cecil, your well wishers. How proud, how grateful you ought to be! And yet I can see the disdainful curl of your lip as you read this, and hear your 'pshaw! pshaw!' as if you were not, *en vérité*, the

most meritorious personage under the sun, and the world could possibly be deceived.

Don't be too coxy, though. Greatness has its penalties as well as privileges, my dear pupil. Riches bring their claims as well as their congratulations. What's to be done with those troublesome little fry coming nibbling by dozens? Disgusting! So it is, the mites—to be intruding their tiny selves at such a moment on your gracious Greatness? But, *caveat emptor*—they are best disposed of, and would they could be all scattered to oblivion by a wave of your Lordship's hand. That, in your clemency, not harmonizing with your right noble disposition, you would rather hand them over to your right trusty and well beloved Houghton Palmer, your solicitor-at-law, to be dealt with as in his wisdom might seem fittest. Most just resolve! And if your noble Greatness would further condescend, during the needful process to that end, with the considerate intent and purpose of bringing matters to a more safe and speedy issue, for the sake of those your importunate pigmy claimants, to take the advice of your humble servant Nugent Harvey, at command, and make your noble self *scarce* just for a little while,— your devoted servant takes upon himself to affirm, that your Greatness' couch of roses might be soon without a thorn.

This, in short, my very dear Cecil, is what is most at my heart—always at your service you know well—

at, this moment. *Something Must Be Done.* There's no hurry for a week or two; but we must not allow, as Palmer truly says, what is harmless now, so far, to grow into a Blitton Hawksby's case again. Think about it. For the present, we must not tax your mother's goodness, if we can help it, any further. Give Palmer the power, and what's wanted further shall be forthcoming, somehow, that *I'll* vouch for. If you like, I'll break it to your mother. There'll be no difficulty there that I can see. And, with the Vicar, it won't jeopardize Linwood, anyhow, a jot.

By the bye, Clermont Onslow, you say, talks of a foreign trip. The very thing! You might kill two birds with one stone. Sound him about it. I should think he'd be delighted.

They are coming for me; so, adieu for to-day. We are off to Somerset House, to see *The* Portraits, hung, Walter Pemberton says, capitally! just under Lawrence's Lady Mayoress. There's for you! We bring him back to dinner. He's a genuine fellow! Like him amazingly—we all like him. Best remembrances and all sorts of kind things, don't forget. And, with special regards to good, kind, Esther Lawton—whose whey posset, tell her, Mrs. Lennox says, "has set her up again already,—"

Believe me, my very dear Cecil,

Ever affectionately yours,

N. H.

P.S.—What a precious hotch-potch, I hear you cry. 'Gad! so it is. But go it must now, or none. I've been scribbling on, as the thought came uppermost, fast as pen could go, while they were up dressing. Which shall it be—drop it in the box—or pitch it behind the grate? At any other time there couldn't be a doubt about it. Your heart will be too full to be critical to-morrow. *Veritatis simplex oratio est*, say I."

"Very indeed!" smiled Lord Fitzherbert, with the curl of the lip peculiar to him. "'Richest heiress but one in England'—bosh! What then? O Annie, Annie! without a piastre for thy portion, who so rich as thou, sweet, peerless Annie? 'Looked charming—so do Lady Tinsel's pastes—the diamonds not by. Plympton 'sweet on her'—kind Heaven prosper him! 'Couldn't approve it at all with any less rival than Cecil Fitzherbert'—oh, the parasite! 'Something must be done'—peste! true enough that. Pshaw! It lies, don't it, in a nutshell? Odd, I was thinking the same thing. Yes, something *must* be done!" and, seizing his pen, Lord Fitzherbert wrote as under:—

Marksbury Vicarage, May, &c.

My dear Harvey,

I have just time before post to say, in answer to yours of to-day, your suggestion seems to me the

very thing, if my mother will give her consent. I'm not so sure about it. It will break so through her pet plans for me, God bless her! But I'll leave it to you. If you can't succeed with her, no one can. Of course, I shall say nothing to them here till you write again.

They're dunning me again like the deuce. It's quite horrid! Anything for a quiet life. From six to seven thousand would do it. Had a great deal rather my mother wasn't worried about it, if it can be helped. She'd bleed to the last drop for me I know; but we mustn't ride the willing horse till he breaks down. Give me credit for some conscience. 'Pon honour! I've got that "organic structure," as Dan Dunlop calls it, a heart; or whence all the cardiacal thumping at this moment?

Clermont would be delighted; the very thing alone wanting to decide him. And the Vicar, though he never goes to bed on Saturday nights owing man anything, is a reasonable animal, loves me dearly; and couldn't deny me anything. Besides, as you say, Linwood's not to be scheduled to the deed.

Odd, that the same thought has struck me several times. Not odd, though, at all; for you have moulded me in many things so much after the image of yourself, that it would be odd indeed if it were otherwise. Don't fret about my wits. Though my heart thumps away, Plato hadn't a cooler brain,

believe me. There again how can I ever be grateful enough? Though it was no joke, I can tell you, with that "little bundle of mischief" let loose at me. Had I been a pupil of Socrates himself, he had been of me.

Respond in fit terms, I pray you, to my many well-wishers. If I conduce in any way to their joy, *Jubilate!* to your hearts' content, my masters all.

You don't say a word about your new house. The 'bright eyes' will be spying out other great names besides Cecil Fitzherbert and the Lady Emma's, I suppose, soon under the *on dits—greatly to the advantage* of somebody I know.

Aunt Gerty's dying to know all the opinions about *The* Portrait. The Lady Mayoress be hanged!—Who'll look at her? Knew you'd like Pemberton. A genuine fellow, isn't he? Sound as a rock; no humbug about him. Often think, tell him, of his *Pampered Lordship;* or *Shower of Legs of Mutton, ready roasted.* Pity he don't paint it—worthy of Hogarth.

Shall be on the hooks rather till you write again. Aunt Lucy only to be spoken to. A brick of a mother! And Esther,—set Esther to work, that's all, for a six months' campaign, making, and marking, and planning, and packing—she's happy as a queen! And, as for Annie, when she knows there's no alternative, poor Annie's cheeks will regain their

roses, I'll be bound for it. And, touching Waddle; yes, Waddle will feel a pang, I'll warrant you.

Au revoir, then, *mon cher*—lest I get pathetic. I wouldn't trust myself. *Puerta abierta, al santo tiento.* Say all sorts of loving things for me; and, holding you to my heart,

Believe me as ever, my dear Harvey,

Yours,

C. C.

P.S.—Ask Bella, if she has quite forgotten her fond foster-brother? I can't and won't believe she's really off Chambers' list, till I've proof positive under her own hand and seal; and then, my heart will be happy again, and, *not till then*, mind tell her."

Having sealed and directed this necessary little preliminary to the purpose in view;—"That will do for to-day," said Cecil to himself, and was sweeping what still remained for consideration into a drawer, till a more convenient opportunity, when up turned another old face with an irresistible appeal; and, leading him to the window,—"By George!—*ecce homo!*" cried he—"Charlie boy, as I'm living—*in propriâ personâ.* Well, that's brave of you!" and, falling to most affectionate perusal of his face, without more ado the two old bosom friends discoursed as follows:—

"J. U. S.

Give you joy, old fellow! and many on 'em! Happy to take a rich friend by the hand. Don't happen to have a loose thousand or two about you? Know it's only to ask? You'll think of me. That's kind.

Couldn't keep your neck out of it? Wouldn't take warning? Poh! I'd a better opinion of you. Gad! though, if you *must*—there's no comparison between the two animals. See you're a judge of a cow. Betsy's the beauty! But, lor! Emma 'll beat her hollow, come to mammy. Lots of tin, too, eh? Oh! you mercenary!

But when's it to come off? And who'll give her away? A Duke of course. 'After the breakfast, the happy couple, &c. &c.' Oh my senses! You'll never be married in tights? How many bridesmaids? Of course Rachel's to be one? Whatever you do, don't be spliced by a Bishop. It's clean snobbish! Cake, of course. None of your skinflint couple of cards—none of your confounded cheeseparing economy. But Old England for ever, my boy! Keep it up. Down with your cussed Young England, patent-polish, paltry, penny-farthing pot-scrapings!

And now, I'll be sworn, you'll be weeding your acquaintance. Have a care, old chap, what you're

at. Charlie Ferrers stands no nonsense, mind you. But I say—you'll do it gentlemanly—give us a good blow-out first, now, won't you? Bet you a hundred the first's a *girl*. Don't mind standing god-father, if you'll come down handsome. Shooting's pretty good, isn't it, at Castlemore? Think you gave me *carte blanche*. Shan't forget you. Lots of Barnes' yellow seal, too, isn't there?

Well, how do you get on? Stunning, eh? Becoming quite domesticated, Harvey says,—quite an altered creature! Prayers night and morning regular? What a comfort to your mother!

And The Maid of Marksbury—

> "Ah Corydon! ah poor unhappy swain!
> Sweet Annie will thy homely gifts disdain;
> Nor, shouldst thou offer all thy little store,
> Will noble Cecil yield, but offer more."

Scandalous! Wouldn't I, then, were I Emma Sommersley, turn into a little bird some fine day if I could, and have a peep with my own eyes and ears at Annie Lawton. Don't tell me! Know bettter than that. Charlie blind? Whew! Look into the white of Charlie Boy's eye—what do you see, eh—any green in it? Well, it's her affair, nobody else's. Charlie's not the boy to spoil sport. Only, if anything should go crooked ever—won't answer for it, and so I tell you—if anything should; don't say, mind, I didn't

warn you. Howard Plympton a muff? Crimine, then, you should have seen him last night in his new tog! What'll you stand if I shoot him? Peppery chap! Be cautious!

How's the old Beagler? Jolly old brick as ever took a fence! Never's going to come to the scratch with that little wilful will-o-the-wisp, Rosalie Bainbridge, is he now? What's Louisa Rodney about? Fire and fury! won't there be devil's dust between 'em.

So, Jem's floored at last? Thanks, by the bye, for the game. Didn't it put me in mind of jolly old times, that's all. Meant to write before; but, confound it! always a something, isn't there? and never could find a pen. And a precious stump of a thing it is now. Bother it—what odds? Tell me the sort of a scrawl it is—eh, Cecil, my boy—an old friend can't make out? Tell me that—I'll trust you. Make out? Yes, by Jove!—blind of both eyes. So, by-bye now, and good luck to you. Anything in Charlie's way—always happy you know.

And, I say—in doing that weeding—don't blame you, mind, at all,—only just be circumspect—just be careful a bit, that's all, if you wouldn't break his heart outright—and not be making a mistake, and casting away—you understand—a favourite old flower, you used, times back, to love to wear Sundays as well as worky days, you wretch! smart lad that you always were—named,

CHARLIE FERRERS.

If you did, you'd repent it bitterly—bitterly! I can tell you."

"*Veritatis simplex oratio est*;"—there is *no* end to it, seemingly, to day," smiled Cecil, as he dropped Charlie Boy into a reserved nook among a host of other *memorabilia* to come up another day. "And, yet, the bosom friend would rob me again unabashed, but get a chance. *Telle est la vie!*" and, taking his hat, Lord Fitzherbert, pondering as he went, sought his cousin Clermont, to sound him, as the first essential step touching the attainment of the projected end in view.

More than a week wore away; but still, though Clermont leant ready eye and ear enough to his cousin's charming *tableaux*, and not a post but brought GOLD! GOLD! GOLD! in by the bushels, only waiting for the gathering; though Aunt Gerty "only wished she was a man," and even Esther's eyes began to sparkle at the thought; still lingered Clermont Onslow; still some enchanting spell overpowered all; still gazed, and pondered, and sighed and sickened, and resolved, and revoked the home-tied heart. It was past endurance. Something Must Be Done! Annie herself must take him, then, to task.

And so Annie did. But Annie had far better have had nothing to do with it at all. It was a great mistake that of Aunt Gerty's.

"Are the hours left—the last I may ever know of joy, who knows—so many," asked Clermont, sadly, "that you would abridge them of one moment?"

What could Annie say? What did she say? All that aching heart, swimming eye, and quivering lip could plead; and that was all Aunt Gerty advantaged by it.

Matters were getting serious—worse and worse! Annie paler, and paler—and Clermont almost pitiable to behold. Something Must Be Done!

We owe a deal to chance in this life, often a great deal more than we deserve. It accomplishes for us every day what all our efforts are unequal to effect. Again came from London the home budgets of glad tidings, and, among them, Lady Edith's full consent to every thing required of her. Nugent Harvey had done wonders! When did he ever fail where determined to succeed? It but remained to have the Vicar's, and Lucy Onslow's sanction; and leave Nugent Harvey alone for arranging all the rest. Here was brave news! And, full of it, though with that perfect mastery over self would have made even Socrates so proud, Cecil entered the study, just as Clermont, but a minute before, had rushed in with a palpitating heart and the newspaper in his hand.

"Ah! off at last, is it?" met the Vicar, smiling; "if we don't change our mind, Clermont?"

"If that be the case," began Cecil, looking encouragingly at Clermont.

"No more *ifs*," said Clermont, firmly as a slight spasmodic heaving of the chest would let him. "I'm in earnest; my mind's is made up, Sir—I start on Monday."

The Vicar ran his eye, without seeming to hear, over the 'Ecclesiastical Preferments.'

"I am in earnest, Sir, I assure you," repeated Clermont.

"Then, I have a favour to crave of you, Sir," continued Cecil, after a rapid, searching glance at his cousin.

The Vicar looked up. "Ah!—you—what? Yes—anything, my dear Cecil—anything in my power, you know—what?"

"That you will give your sanction, Sir, that's all, to my mother's consent, herein contained," replied Cecil, laying Nugent Harvey's letter on the table, together with a special note from Lady Fitzherbert to Esther, in her own hand—"to my being my cousin Clermont's *bon camerade* on the projected gold trip; or Heaven knows only what may happen to him."

Talk of an earthquake—talk of Esther thinking ill of any living soul—talk of Aunt Gerty ever compounding with the truth—talk of Annie having a wish beyond her home—talk of Socrates stumbling—talk of Rosalie knuckling under to Mrs. Rodney—talk of anything impossible at Marksbury to happen,

—the expression of the Vicar's face may just be conceived, but no language can describe it, as, having read the letter, he sat thunderstruck for a moment, altogether at a loss for a reply.

But Lancelot Lawton's was a mind not long to be at fault. Ere Clermont, dumbstruck with astonishment and delight, could find expression for the tumult of joys with which his heart was bursting:—

"My dear Cecil," said the Vicar, "you have, indeed, taken me by surprise. This is most unexpected. Give me credit but for one motive in what I have to say. It is enough that you have your mother and Dr. Vaughan's consent. Of course, my anction must ever follow their's. But have you well considered this? It is a kind, a generous, a noble wish on your part! That I allow. No one admires such affectionate sentiments between heart-ties like yours more than myself; but have you considered well, I repeat, before thus acting. Yours is not the mind, my dear Cecil, to resolve on anything, I think, without due reflection. You are resolved? Well, I must own, I could have wished it had been a little later; and that we had made all we might—which I'm afraid we have hardly, as yet, done, but for that I lay no fault on you—of our short time together. In some respects, I do feel it is a pity! I had flattered myself we had conquered the first steps; and were really getting into something like a plan. But

if it must be—it must. Still, you may do much, if you will, with a little regular, daily, systematic application—such as we were getting into. I am pleased to see, that Mr. Harvey, so far, highly approves of the progress we have made. I will say, so far, you have given me no little satisfaction. Yes, I had hopes we should have done great things together, my dear Cecil."

"Our separation, my dear Sir, may, not unlikely, be much shorter than we suppose," said Cecil, with feeling. When the sentiment is satisfied, Sir, perhaps—"

"Ah! true, true," returned the Vicar. "There appear to be good reasons, too, I see—for a short absence. I trust—sincerely trust—for both your sakes, my dear boys, it may be short. You know my opinion of foreign travel, in nineteen cases out of twenty? Not many return, I fear, wiser and happier than they went. On some few rare moulds of mind—English in particular—foreign travel may make good and fruitful impressions; but their number is infinitesimally small, compared with the thousands it unsettles and corrupts. Then, you really are determined? Well, we must hope for the best. And bear up under it as best we may. You will throw all our hearts at Marksbury into mourning. All in one day—to lose you both."

"Nay, nay, Sir," interrupted Clermont,—"if you think it wiser—if you think—"

"Think only, Sir—that is best," exclaimed Cecil, grasping the Vicar's hand; "think only of the joyful day, Sir, when, loaded with laurels and with colours flying, you hail us back again, and set the old bells pealing—who can tell, it may be Linwood's?—though, for that, give me old Marksbury's, eh Clermont, against the world, for *Home Sweet Home!*—Sir, think only of that happy day—when the old tower will go mad again with joy; and the ale taps be flowing, and the bon-fires burning, and the whole ox roasting, and every heart bounding, like your own, to welcome us back again."

"Yes, yes—*citopede*, may that brave day soon come. Heaven's will be done, my dear boys," said the Vicar, "in that as in everything else. May He watch over, and have you in his keeping. And, wheresoever it may be that His hand shall re-unite us—there, I trust, will ever be a united, happy home for us all, my dear boys, as long as it shall please Him to give it us. I am an old man—my sand will soon be run out,—but, please God, I hope yet to see the day, when—" but here the Vicar was too much affected—his voice faltered; and, after a struggle;—"go—go now," said he, agitatedly—"we will talk more about it by and bye. How little any, the wisest of us, can calculate, to-day, on what the morrow may bring forth."

And, now, what would it avail but mercilessly to try the indulgent reader's patience, already we are afraid

too sorely overtaxed, to dwell on the tumult of events, surprises, and emotions, and hopes, and fears, and anxious counsellings, and anticipations, and assurances, and the loving thoughts unnumbered that could find no utterance, and the preparations, and purchases, and presents, and plannings, and packings up, and pathetic leave-takings that kept all Marksbury in a ferment of alternate joy and sorrow for the next ten days?

Oh! it is a scene, that parting scene, too familiar to every heart to need description. That last appeal in every look and word, in which there is a voice, a tone, a melody, we never heard before; that pledge of love—that priceless token—that last, long embrace—that burning kiss—that earnest grasp—that gaze more eloquent than a million tongues—that last faltering fare thee well;—Oh! who are there who do not treasure in their fondest thoughts some precious *souvenir* of that sad *farewell?*

Or need we particularise how on every side the too full heart found a channel for its heaving overflowings; how gift followed gift; and thoughtful addition addition, till not even Aunty could invent a want; how Lady Fitzherbert's munificent bounty knew no bounds; how Bella vied night and day with Annie in the work of love; how the Vicar mapped out plans and laid down precepts worthy of a Mentor; how Esther made and mixed; and, with Lucy's Onslow, parcelled, and planned and packed, from morn to night; of the red serge shirts and Californian hat-

the real gold-digging gloves, and mining-boots, the scarlet blankets, guns and pistols, bowie knives, picks, pots, and pans, preserves, and pickles, and Heaven knows what else? and last, but not least, the *Esther Cordial* and the *Esther Cup*, without which none, who valued their health or comfort, would dream of leaving their native shore without the due supply; how Rosalie worked her little fingers almost sore,—though, "Oh! wouldn't she give them a penny a pound, and wouldn't they jump to take it, too? for all the gold they ever got, the noodles!" how Huntworth seriously lent a helping hand, and was once "in two minds—whether he'd care a rap, then, for Mrs. Rodney, but be off, too, with 'em;" how Walter Pemberton did all sincere friend could; and Nugent Harvey so surpassed himself as almost to look handsome in Bella Gordon's eyes; how, the fever spreadling, Sam and Hannah were like 'things bewitched;' till at length all Marksbury catching fire, the poor Vicar had enough to do, and almost thought once of calling out Master Bidborough to keep the peace?

The wanderers are gone; and with them every good gift and fervent prayer and promise should strew their path with flowers. And, to leave nothing wanting, Bella's gipsy-eyed *protégée*, the poor flower-lad —now grown, under genial auspices, stout and strong, is gone, too, as body attendant and *factotum*.

Not a thing omitted can Esther find, do what she

Old Marksbury is more like itself again. And Annie and Aunty, while Lady Fitzherbert and Bella hold soul-wrapped communings together in Lucy Onslow's little drawing-room with Esther and the Vicar, sit, hand in hand, and heart in heart, musing and meditating on the hill-side as the evening draws in.

A little wild flower that Annie loves peeps appealingly through the turf-tuft at her feet. An inadvertant step, and she shudders to think she might have crushed it. She stoops to pick it; and, as she puts it in her bosom, a tear steals to her eye.

"It is getting cold," says Aunt Gerty, rising and drawing her shawl round her. "We will go in now, love."

"Is it?" sighs Annie, absently, and casting a still lingering look towards the distant south. "I wonder where they are at this moment, Aunty?"

"Safe and snug on ocean's bosom, darling, sailing a-pace, I'll warrant, before this bonny breeze."

"What doing, I wonder?"

"Thinking of us, that I'll be bound, love," cheers Aunt Gerty, returning the thrilling pressure of the hand, "as we are of them, my sweetest."

"Do you think so, really?" smiles Annie, through her tears.

"Sure of it, dearest—quite certain—my right ear burns, love, so this evening!"

CHAPTER V.

THE HOPE DEFERRED THAT MAKETH SICK.

TWELVE months have passed since Aunt Gerty's "bonny breeze" was bearing away the wanderers from their native shores; and, as yet, no "bonny breeze" has wafted them back again to *Home Sweet Home*.

Twelve months! What then? But as a brief hour, true, in the joyous history of the happy, a thing of nought, a *bagatelle* hardly missed; but oh, how vast a void, how dreary a drag, how sore a sacrifice to the pining heart, to which every anxious moment seems an endless age!

And more than twelve long, watchful, weary weeks have worn away; and not even a tiding of the absentees.

And sad, very sad, and sick at heart paces Lady Fitzherbert her chamber as the evening draws in, conjuring up in the twilight, poor anxious soul! a

thousand torturing thoughts to no avail. Lady Fitzherbert is alone; for what would Bella and Annie, linked heart in heart together in a sweet compact of mutual love and confidence death alone shall ever sever, do without each other; and Aunt Gerty, to please that tiresome Walter Pemberton, all this time away on her London dissipations?

This suspense is agonizing! "Twelve long weeks, and not a line;" and, as the twilight deepens—for twice Norton has essayed her best, but in vain, to take in lights,—Lady Fitzherbert ceases to measure the room from end to end with restless steps, and, sinking into a chair, her head drops on her breast; her hands are convulsively clasped together—her whole soul seems to struggle within her—her lips move as if in prayer;—and, the struggle over, for aught else of life but the scarce audible breathing, so motionless does she sit, she might be taken for a corpse.

The life tide ebbs again. The overcharged heart must find some vent, or burst—the heaving bosom can contain no more—tears trickle fast and burning down those rest-robbed cheeks. Again move the quivering lips. "Where is he—oh, where?—her boy—her first—her last—her precious one—her best—her only treasure! Can it be?—no, no—impossible! She will not think it—nought, nought of evil, can have happened to him—God can protect His own.

It is not that. But why not write—or send—if but a line—a word—a message only? It is unkind, inconsiderate—that is what cuts her!"—and faster flow the tears down those care-worn cheeks. "Or, can it be, that her letters have miscarried? Strange! not a line from either for twelve weeks. Is it possible—can it be?"—and every nerve thrills at the thought—"can it be—O Heaven grant it! that he is now on his way home—to take her—just like him—just what his father loved to do—to take her—O ecstatic moment! by surprise? perhaps, before another day, to be pressed—never again to part till death—to her throbbing heart?—and, mechanically arranging her cap before the glass, and then approaching the window, Lady Fitzherbert looks out into the street, and, following with straining eyes every public vehicle as it hurries by, takes no note of time as it glides away; till, looking up to the darkening sky, she lingers, still gazing on vacancy, yet a moment longer; and, turning from the fruitless quest, "no—not to-night," she says languidly,—"*to-morrow*—perhaps *to-morrow*. Norton is sure of it. There was a bright omen, she says, in her candle last night, which never fails! Oh, if so, Heaven speed it—Guardian Angels have it in their keeping! Why tarries he? Have I not done all that fondest mother could do for his happiness? What could I have done more? Nugent Harvey knows the sacrifices I have

made; and would still make, if necessary, to the last guinea in my pocket. Twelve weeks now, and not a line. O my God, my God!" and. burying her face in her hands, Lady Fitzherbert's trembling knees find support for several minutes on her *prie-dieu* chair.

Rising, apparently, much happier. "Patience, fond, fretful heart," she ejaculates—"why murmurest thou? Lie still—lie still, rebellious heart! Thy will be done! Cannot He—will He not protect His own? Yes, yes—lie still—lie still—He can—He will—He will!" and, drying her tears—for sincerely believes that fond, hoping, mother's heart that the Heavenward appeal will have its weight. Lady Fitzherbert, much solaced, rings for candles, and good, clever, comfort-giving Norton with them, to confirm the trust.

But more fond, anxious, hoping hearts by many than Lady Fitzherbert's are sighing at this moment also for that precious, longed-for, long-arriving *morrow*, which, with its glorious sunshine bursting forth anew, and dispelling for ever every dark cloud and gathering mist and frowning shadow, shall make up, and over, for all the short comings of to-day.

In his snug moss-pattern carpeted little study—while Esther, the light-failing, let fall her work in her lap, as, with a pensiveness at heart very unusual with Esther Lawton, and which had kept her silently plying her needle and pondering as the twilight deepened for the last half hour, she followed the passing forms of

her children, as she called them, watching Humphrey bestowing his last can-ful on his favourite pansies—sat Marksbury's grave Vicar, also musing on *to-morrow*.

There was little in the history of the past for sad thought in Vicar Lawton's life. It was a past would bear often calling back to mind; a happy picture, on the whole, to contemplate; its shadows so softly blended with its lights, so subservient, so subdued, in such harmonious keeping, that, possibly, Lancelot Lawton for that very reason sometimes wearied of his "Cuyp;" and now was bartering it away, in fancy, for the veriest daub was ever seen.

"Strange! another week gone," mentally communed the Vicar with himself—laying aside the pile of papers for his next Sunday's sermon which he had been looking over for the last two hours, and throwing himself back in his old leathern reading chair, with the pen still wet in his hand;—"strange!—three months, come Wednesday, and not a line. Heaven grant it's all well! they may have found a monster nugget, too, as well as others—why not—True, that would be glorious—and are coming, when we least expect them, to—to surprise us? Ah! that would be something to set the old bells mad again with joy about, as Cecil says; and the whole ox roasting, and the ale-taps flowing, and the bonfires blazing, and all hearts bounding for twenty miles around; a day of days, indeed, for these old eyes to

see! Or, if as poor as Job—welcome, thrice a thousand times welcome to *Home Sweet Home!* Pshaw! what want we, at Marksbury, any of us, of monster nuggets? as Edith says. Monster miseries! The devil's gold-dust, with which he blinds, then leads us, plunging, panting on, into the pit. Accursed mammon! that comes, like a wily serpent, to our happy hearths and homes; with its insidious smiles, luring the honest heart from its only rightful service; sowing pride and discontent where love and peace and unity were wont alone to dwell; robbing the good cause to give colour to the bad; taking away the industrious and useful, leaving behind the idle and the worthless. Oh, England, England!—it needs no prophet to foresee how bitterly thou wilt some day rue the mistaken policy that transported by thousands from thy shores those useful sons and daughters of thine so much wanted, though thou couldst not see it then, at home; because thou knewest not, or wert too selfish, or supine, to make their wits and thews and sinews available, before all other thoughts, to the development and fruitful working of thine own infinite, though unexplored, resources, poor blind England! Thou wilt find it out to thy cost, as thou hast often done in other things before, when, alas! it is too late; when by thy short-sightedness, or indolence, or obstinacy thou hast generously contrived, with thy usual magnani-

mity, to enrich everybody, mayhap, but thyself.—Rich or poor, though—we shall make the old bells ring a merry peal, I'll warrant, when the truants come. Would it were this very night! *To-morrow*—who knows? Who, the wisest of us, can say what an hour may produce? Poor Lady Fitzherhert!—my heart bleeds for her. She has, indeed, done all, and more than all, a mother should, to the lasting injury, I'm fearing, of herself. 'Faith! Nugent Harvey should be honest. Vaughan is a simple, credulous, confiding creature. As a boy at school—would give his money to that Sydney Pipps, the biggest knave of the lot, to keep for him, and pay him, too, commission. She needs a stronger mind than his about her. What's Nugent Harvey about, I wonder? He's a shrewd one! Castlemore's in for it pretty deep, I suspect. Let's see—there must be yet—if this gold-mania hasn't turned his wits;"—and, leaning on his elbow as he bent forward to dip his pen in the ink, the Vicar, having done a little rule-of-three sum on his blotting-case twice over, abstractedly traced the outline of a coronet alongside of it; then, falling back again in his chair,—"Poor thing!" murmured he—"that was a stunning blow! O Mammon, Mammon! that elevates us one hour to the highest pinnacle, then crushes us in a moment with despair—what the ' -t suffers for thee what mortal tongue can tell?

Something fearful—something fabulous to think of. Yes—that was a blow, heavier than all. There Nugent Harvey was, for once, at fault. At fault? Not he. He at fault? No, no, not he. He never cared a rush for her, nor she for him. Harvey has a ticklish part to play, that's true. We shall see. Who knows? Best as it is perhaps. They never could have been happy together—impossible! Lady Emma's the disposition, the mind, the air, the manners to deal with a temper like Lord Fitzherbert's? Poh! Flint and steel. The woman to make Cecil Fitzherbert happy, to not only win him, but to keep him, must have qualities of rare perfection of mind as well as person. She must be the very antipodes of himself—simple, unsuspicious, gentle, amiable, sweet-tempered, fond, confiding. Men love not best, in women, the reflex of themselves. On the contrary, it will not be enough that she is beautiful—beautiful beyond compare! her moral graces, her sterling virtue, her simple truthfulness, her solid understanding, her cheerful devotion to her duties, her genuine piety, her unselfish love must not be inferior to her charms of person, were she lovely as a Venus!"—and Vicar Lawton—as Esther, moving her seat to a corner of the bay-window, kept her eyes fixed, as well as the waving light would let her, alternately on the forms of her children arm in arm doing their best to prolong those

delicious moments of *their* to-morrow-hoping, round and round the little rambling lawn; and, then, on a huge mass of black lowering clouds, in two minds, seemingly, whether to pass over, or to save Master Humphrey any more concern about his ponies,—put the finishing touches to the coronet; till, having made a blotch of the cipher, just trying to see how an A came in between the C and F.—"lucky fellow, Howard Plympton," exclaimed Lancelot Lawton, half-aloud, while demolishing the fairy structure with a stroke of the pen;—"will suit each other exactly to a T."

"Who, my dear—who will suit each other, dear?" asked Esther, in a tone that came from the heart, still keeping her gaze fixed on the arms of her children wound round each other's waists. "Ah, yes! the dear girls—they will—they will indeed. A great comfort, isn't it? Bless me! what a flash! That's how it is my poor head has been so bad all to-day."

"A passing thunder cloud, that's all," said the Vicar, rising, and sharply ringing the bell. It's time they came in now. Humphrey might have spared the watering-pot. 'Faith! but we're going to have a soaker."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Esther, rushing from the room as another still more vivid flash played in the Vicar's pallid face, followed instantly by a stunning crash made the old house tremble from its

foundation, as, the heavens opening, down come the pelting hail-stones thick and fast, beating like mad against the shivering lattices. "Heavens! what was that?—what was that?"

"It is passing over," said the Vicar, meeting, in spite of his apparent unconcern, the assuring kiss of his child, and Bella's fervent pressure of the hand, as he removed their dripping wet shawls, with glistening eyes.

"Oh, mercy!—there again—what was that?" exclaimed Esther. "That was more than a common thunder-clap. O my head! Sam and Hannah say it's a sure sign. Hark!"

"Stuff and nonsense! What matters what Sam and Hannah say, the noodles! A sure sign?—yes, to be sure it is—no doubt of it—the wiseacres—a sure sign enough—who don't know that?—of a brighter day to-morrow."

But the Vicar's bloodless lips belied the words of promise; for hark!—loud above the storm, while yet he spoke—came wailing voices, louder and louder, of terror and lamentation. "Merciful God! what now—what now?"

There had been a dark cloud overhanging every heart that day, the sound of sorrow and sadness in every sigh and moaning of the wind, an indistinct dread, not expressed, but felt, of some impending evil hanging over. And Esther stood aghast, as crash

followed crash, with upraised eyes and clasped hands; and Annie and Bella, as the whole heavens were lighted up with one continuous, blinding flash, clung closer in their awe struck helplessness to each other; while the Vicar, with his arms folded on his breast, looked calmly on, resting his trust, like Esther, on Him who alone could remove their burthen, be it what it might, or give them strength to bear it as they ought.

O night of woe!—"Haste, haste—a thunderbolt—a thunderbolt!—More hands—more hands—quick, quick—the large barn is burning—quick, quick! or the whole place will be on fire." Woe, woe!—the spirit of death and destruction rides upon the storm—the work of vengeance and devastation strews the ground. "On, on—more hands—more hands!—Ha, merciful Heaven!—see, see—the flames have caught the sheds. Thank Heaven!—the wind is to the north, and the old house is safe. Bring out the horses—make haste—make haste!" "They will not stir—they are like things bewitched." "Blindfold them—get upon their backs—out with them—quick—make haste, or it will be too late. Where, where is Socrates?" "In the paddock—safe by the barley-stack—Humphrey is gone to bring him in." "Look, look,—the sky is one mass of lurid fire. They must see it from Roxberry on the hill. And not a stick insured. Spite of the Squire, the Vicar never would. Woe, woe!" Hush!

—what means that cry of consternation from the paddock? "Quicker, quicker!—see, see, how the flames lick round the old barn—how they dance and play in hellish hunger about their victim. Again—ah—woe, woe!—worse still the two oaks—the Vicar's favorites—planted by his own hand now nearly thirty years ago—are torn like reeds up by the roots! and, O sorrow, sorrow!—there lies old Socrates—poor old Socrates! struck down—dead—dead, beneath their blackened branches. And, oh! worst of all—or wherefore that livid paleness on Sam's cheeks, as he catches Hannah hurriedly by the arm and brings those tears gushing down that smiling face?—worst, worst of all—but tell it not to Annie—not, not for worlds to-night;—there on her window-sill—true and faithful to the last—lies Paul—dead—dead! too! And now what will poor Virginia do without him? What, what? Break her heart, and pine, and die—that is all that's left for poor Virginia!

"Poor Virginia! poor Virginia!" And is there not a tear to spare for poor old Socrates? No, it is all for "poor Virginia!—poor Virginia!" And Hannah blubbers till her eyes are red, as she talks of it to Sam; and Sam feels something in his throat he cannot swallow, and "would give—hang him then if he wouldn't—a £5 note, if he'd got it, could he bring Paul back to life again?" Yes, indeed, and so would Mrs. Hopkins, and Mr. Jennings, "double five, for

dear Miss Annie's sake." Yes, yes, and so would every heart in the village, and for five miles round, if there's any dependance to be placed on honest Sam.

"Hush! my dear children all," affectionately reproved the Vicar. "Let us not add the sin of murmuring at God's decrees to our tresspasses. It has pleased Him, in His mercy, to afflict us. It is in His mercy only we are ever scourged. Let us kiss—humbly, reverently, repentantly, and gratefully kiss the Hand that smites us. We live, all of us, too much, I fear, as if there were no past, nor future—nothing worthy of our solitude but the present—little to regret, or repent of, or atone for. We require to be reminded of our blindness—our danger. Let us not disregard the warning lessons taught us by His love. He is all love for us, my children, when His frown appears the darkest. And, now, let us on our knees prove that we think it is so; and, with humble heart, thank Him, from whom nought but blessings flow, for all His goodness to us this day; and, with perfect faith and full assurance, cheerfully leave to His will whatever it may seem good to His wisdom to require of us at all times."

Still, though, Sam owned that what the Vicar said was "as good as a sermon," Sam could not, do what he would, get the fate of poor Paul, anyhow, off his mind. "It was ever so with true love," he [illegible] it never did run smooth." And Hannah

" could have listened to him for ever as he told about it, though it made her turn cold as ice from head to foot. And didn't it just bring true what she dreamt last night, and saw, plain as a pikestaff, in the cards at Sally Henshaw's ?" And precisely of the same mind was Mrs. Hopkins. " She'd go, too, by the cards sooner than anything; unless, as Mr. Jennings said —and quite possible, too—and she hoped with all her heart and soul it would be, they got a letter— and she didn't see a bit why they shouldn't—*to-morrow* morning; and, then, wouldn't that pretty soon make all their hearts light and lissom again as corks ? For her part, she hadn't known, and that was true, a happy hour, no not one, since Mr. Clermont left. Every thing had gone cross and crooked like. No, nothing was as it used to be. And the Vicar, he did get so touchy and testy, there was no pleasing him anyhow. And Missus, she didn't know what had come to her—she wasn't the same creature. And Miss Annie, that used to look so round and rosy, and fresh, and all life and light-heartedness—now see ! It made her heart ache again to look at her, it did. Heigho ! would to goodness they were all safe and snug home again, that was all the harm she wished 'em. *She* never knew any good, for her part, in their precious gold-heaps, not she. What did the Vicar say last Sunday in his sermon ?—wasn't that just true ?—

'Riches take unto themselves wings; but there is an Inheritance that never fails.'

'Riches and honours are with Me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.'

'My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.'

"And, yet, just tell her this—how many of 'em that heard it, and said *yes* with their lips—said *no*, too, nine out of ten of 'em, in their hearts. Yes, and mind her words!—the only fruits they'd ever bring back with them would be, or she was much mistaken, bitter ones! Enough of those, and to spare, she'd be bound! But what odds, as Jennings says, if they only served to teach 'em better for the time to come? People must be taught. All she hoped and trusted, and that she did with all her heart, —was that the postman would bring 'em good news *to-morrow*;—and, then, nobody, not they, would care two buttons for the old barn."

Stretched on her bed of uncomplaining pain and patience and long suffering lay Lucy Onslow, as the storm raged, sick and sad at heart—thinking of her boy, and fondly building also on what *to-morrow* might bring forth; when suddenly the western sky was illumined with a fiery red, and cries of "fire—fire!—to Marksbury—to Marksbury!—the Vicarage is in flames!" struck like a death-knell on her poor, staggered senses. Drops of cold sweat stood on her

forehead,—then the blood rushed back again to her temples;—"did she hear a-right, or was her wandering mind forsaking her?—Hark!—again—help—help!—to Marksbury—the Vicarage is on fire!" O merciful Heaven!—infirm, and bed-ridden, what was she to do?

Dolly, kind, faithful, never failing Dolly was away, but for a moment, exchanging terrified words and grief-struck looks and exclamations with Ben and farmer Coombs at the garden gate.

There are some harrowing moments of intense feeling, of overpowering emotion, of resistless impulse, whether of joy, or misery, or love, or hate, or dread, or vengeance, in which the meekest soul will bear no bondage in the flesh. And, though cast down by sickness, and sorrow, sorely afflicted Lucy Onslow's mother's heart, hearing in the hour of distress and consternation loved voices calling to her in agonizing accents, oh, how harrowing, at that moment, how entwined with every nerve and fibre of her being! felt the rising power of a Hercules within her. She saw, and heard, and felt only, that those she loved and held far, far dearer than life itself! and but for whose sakes, and the thousand blissful memories attached to them, could she but once more have seen and blessed her boy, once more, before she died, feasted her fond gaze upon his face, and felt his filial kiss upon her cheek, she could have hailed her Saviour's summons as a

grateful boon,—were crying to her for help, for present help—quick, quick!—and she could not reach them.

Oh, moments of unutterable anguish! What pen can ever depict the maddening struggle of that racking brain—that mother's heart—that night of woe? It was on fire, too, that poor fevered brain! An unnatural strength possessed her—a maniac's cords could not now have stopped her. Suddenly she made a desperate effort to rise—and smiled to find the power she still had in her.

"Help—help!—haste—haste!—the old house burns!" still rang knelling like a death-toll in her ears.

Poor, feeble, faltering frame! didst thou over-rate thyself in thy despair? Poor helpless thing of fragile clay! what could avail all those frantic, fruitless throes? They *shall* avail!—they *shall!*—they *shall!* and more by the aid of the anguish that burnt in her, poor, feeble, flickering flame in life's last socket as she was! than by the crutch she clutched in her trembling grasp,—Lucy Onslow gained the floor. "Now, then, God help her but to reach the bell!"

Hark!—again—"help—help!—haste—haste!—the old house burns!"

"Where, where was Ben?—Dolly—Dolly!"—She "would have the chaise out—quick, quick!—the old house—the Parsonage was on fire!—was burning!—help—help!—she would, would go!—she was well—quite well again—no power on earth should stop her—'t cost her her life!—yes, go—go she would!"—and

staggering forward—a film seemed to thicken before her sight—large red-hot burning balls of fire danced before her—the room ran round;—"where—where was she?—the Vicarage—Esther—Annie—Clermont—her boy—her boy—where—where?—and, with a piercing shriek, and tearing the bell-rope down from its fastenings as she fell;—go she did, poor, noble, generous-hearted Lucy! to those blessed abodes above, where sin and sorrow find no habitation, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

O night of woe! chronicled for ever in the hearts of Fernleigh's children, as long as goodness has its history, and there's a loving tongue there left to tell the mournful tale.

Vain every effort to restore the stricken clay; vain alike tears and bitter lamentations.

Why mourn you thus, kind, sorrowing friends? Why sits Esther inconsolable by the death-bed side, with that cold, pulseless hand in hers, as one that has no comfort?

Oh! would you, then, if you could, bring back that ransomed spirit to this sinful, sorrowing world?

Yes—for her Boy's sake—her orphan Boy's, you would.

For her Boy's sake? No, no—you think not of what you say. Grief blinds your better feelings. Care you, then, only for the living? Think, how

happy she is now. Would she return to you if she might? Oh, no, you would not be so selfish, to bring her back to a sad, sinful, sorrowing world, at best, like this. Then, be comforted, good Esther! Great is thy skill, we know, and marvellous the Providential cures thou hast wrought. Thine is a holy office, a blessed privilege—to tend the sick—to feed the hungry—to clothe the naked—to carry comfort to the widow and the fatherless. Yes—blessed, Esther, are such works! Go on with them. But hadst thou an elixir, Esther, could re-animate that crumbling clay;—better, remember "Be a door-keeper in the house of thy God, than dwell in the courts of Kings."

But, after the storm, come often sunniest skies!

To-morrow! still—still, *to-morrow!* O wondrous talisman! And not a heart, though steeped in hopeless woe, apparently, round that cold clay, but clings, in spirit, to *to-morrow!*

And when was that morrow to come?

When? A hard question! which the next chapter must answer, if it can.

How wisely, how mercifully it is ordained! that, in all but the past and present—and too often but empty boasts, at best, are they—we are the fools, the blind, dependent fools, thank Heaven! that we are.

What a Hell in store for him!—if man had the making of the Heaven for himself.

In this, his ignorance is bliss indeed!

CHAPTER VI.

TO-MORROW.

But before we come to the grand question *when*—that question our inability to answer which is nineteen times out of twenty, however we may deplore it, and fume, and fret, at once our best trust, our surest, safest hope,—there are yet two or three other old familiar faces wanting to complete this our present family group of hoping hearts.

In a superbly furnished library, in the gardened rear of a handsome modern house near Eaton Square, done in old Gillow's best style, which, to those who know it, is description sufficient, and to those who do not, where "ignorance is bliss, it might, indeed, be perilous folly to be wise"—sat, on the eventful evening we are considering, indulging himself over his claret after a fagging day of it, Mr. Nugent Harvey, of the great banking house of Saints and Angels.

It was often thus with Mr. Nugent Harvey;

when he dined at home alone, or with an intimate friend like Houghton Palmer, or Charlie Ferrers, Nugent Harvey took his late dinner usually in the library. He preferred it. It was quiet there, away from the noise and dust and traffic of the street. In warm weather he could open the windows if he liked, see a bit of green, which was pleasant, and a brier and rose tree or two, and a couple of laburnums, and not be annoyed. In cold, there were no draughts; he had taken good care of that by having double sashes and outside folding cushioned-*jalousies* for special seasons. And there was an air of comfort and repose about it; the doors seemed to shut snugger, and the curtains to hang closer and cozier, and the fire to burn brighter, and the hearth to be more inviting and approachable—an air more of home, and ease, and freedom, and rest there than in the dining-room. And there, too, were always smiling faces to welcome him, come in when or in what mood he might—in his splendid books; his favourite pictures, collected with rare taste, the 'second selves,' as he used to call them, 'of the great and good, whose companionship, precious privilege! was there, ever at his command, when he wished it, in their deathless works;' in his curious cabinets, and gems of *vertu*, and rare gems of art; in his sculptured *chef-d'œuvres*, worthy of Canova; in every treasured object that met his eye,—even to the old chair he

loved so much; the writing desk that had stuck with him since a boy, his mother's present; the old time-piece that stood and ticked, just as it used to do, upon her shelf; the very pair of tapestry screens she worked with her own hands; her portrait there, better than all, over the mantle piece, never without a mother's sweet smile for him, in weal or woe; his private drawer, too, where he kept her miniature and her letters to the last; the volume, her last gift, he was reading in the morning with the page she had herself turned down; the plain gold pencil case, he had used, and no other, there lying in the inkstand, ever since her death;—in a word, there was an air, a feeling of *Home*—and that best expresses it—and rest, and comfort, and welcome memories in the library, which, complete at all points as was every other room of the house, Nugent Harvey failed to find elsewhere—a feeling that many more apparently passionless hearts than Nugent Harvey's have pleaded guilty to, to their great credit, too, we beg to tell them.

"True, Messrs. Gillow had done their best, and the presiding genius over all no less—without which even the Gillow lacks the crowning grace—to make this as pleasant and perfect an apartment of its kind as mortal heart could wish for; from the rich-moulded chocolate and drab and gold flock paper-hangings on the walls, full deep-fringed mulberry curtains of the finest cloth, magnificent velvet-piled carpet, chastely

bordered in relief, to correspond; classically carved book-cases, and chairs and tables of a class and finish Wilson and Winter would have wept, when the time came, to see knocked down to any but themselves, to the minutest object in the room; one and all of which, to the very bell-pulls and the door-handles, were, as Mrs. Lennox said, "perfect specimens to see!"

Your first impression was, perhaps, one not so much of eager admiration, as of calm delight; your next, that the man who called that room his own ought to be a very happy personage indeed! There was a gracious smile greeted you whichever way you looked, a voice on every side that bade you welcome. Though you trod on velvet, you felt perfectly at ease; though redolent with refinement the atmosphere you breathed, there was no oppression; though the elegance was princely, the comfort was complete. There was a harmony throughout, a repose, a grace, a charming something that made you feel, if you ever sunk into one of those delicous chairs with a sweep of arm and seat it really is a luxury to think on,—there "you could sit for ever almost, and never wish again to move!" At least, so declared Charlotte Lennox, and well content seemed Nugent Harvey, to judge by the smiles he gave her in return.

It was about eight o'clock. Gifford had placed the wine and desert; raised the lamps a turn; thrown

some coals on the fire; trimmed up the hearth; put the hassock within reach;—vanished, and Nugent Harvey was alone.

A couple of decanters, besides an exquisitely cut claret-cruse at his elbow, and four glasses were on the table, though Mr. Harvey was alone; which seemed to leave no doubt that Mr. Harvey expected a friend.

It ought to have been nectar of the rarest and the richest, worthy of the Gods, that sparkled like rubies through that gorgeous, glittering crystal. And nectar it was, we may be sure, or such a connoisseur as Nugent Harvey would not have been tossing off bumper after bumper with thirsty lips like those.

It had been a fagging day. Things that day, verily, had wanted a master head and hand on change to cope withal, and strained to the utmost had been Nugent Harvey's. Such days are no pastime to the mere machiner, bred, born, and broken to his work; but to mould of blood and bone like Nugent Harvey's they must be terribly trying beyond patience, we can fancy. But blood and bone and willing nerve can do great things when but put to it; and Nugent Harvey, as he drank his claret, felt that he *had* done great things that day—very great! and earned his hour of rest, if ever man had.

Never, perhaps, in his life had Nugent Harvey felt the luxury of a solitary hour by his own fire-side

so much as then; but, as he looked at the two glasses opposite him, a cloud gathered on his brow; and, filling his own to the brim, he gulped down the unwelcome thought as well as he could, whatever it might be; then, stretching his legs out to the fire, fixed his eyes fondly on his mother's portrait. What was there in that mother's face so rivetting that night? Nothing could well be more pure and placid looking than that pensive face, not an expression in it after this world's common sympathies. It might have been taken for a saint's, such seeming sweet serenity, such calm christain meekness was there in those soft blue eyes, such adoration, such trust, such heavenward leaning in every look,—and, yet, the man of Belial saw no face like that.

Why fixed Nugent Harvey his gaze so long and so earnestly that night on that sweet, saint-like face? It was the last, one would have thought, he would have cared to seek that day. Strange thing of contrarieties man's heart! Perhaps it recalled at that moment thoughts he would not have shut out wholly, if he could; thoughts of early life, of innocence, and happier days, how long then past he dared not ask himself, but which weaned him, probably, for an instant from himself, and made him feel that he had still a heart. And, spite of the iron will, a tear glistened, and the pensive smile of those heaven hoping eyes grew every moment less distinct. "This

was folly—weakness—nonsense—the first time for many—many a day—he couldn't tell how long—that he had shed a tear. Confounded spooney!—There—he could see again clearer now. What the deuce ailed him?"—and down went again bumper after bumper of the sovereign *Lafitte*.

It would not do. What was wine, and a loved mother by to set the unholy cup at nought? He might swallow gallons that night, and it could not lighten a feather that harassed, heavy, home-aching heart. "Why should he not think of those innocent, happy days? Why try and shut them from his sight? Had he known one happy hour since to compare with them, one single hour of real unalloyed joy since his mother's death? No, not one!—and, again encountering that sweet, placid face,—he could see, and hear, and feel nothing but that tender gaze, those loving accents, that hallowed kiss upon his cheek; as, sitting by his little white dimity-curtained tent-bed side in the octagon dressing-room next her own at the old house, she tended him in his sickness with a mother's care, shifted his fevered pillow, would let no hand feed him but her own, and brought him fruits, and flowers, and pleasant picture-books, and never left him an hour through the live-long night;—or, in health and strength and bounding spirits, was ever the first to smile upon him at early morn; and, the day's duties done, to plan all

sorts of fun and frolic for his pastime;—or, when his father was harsh or angry, strove her best to gently heal the wound—to drop the precious word in season—to whisper peace—to counsel filial love, and duty, and obedience, and, above all, self-control;—or, when the summer was gone, the pains and pleasure she took to entice and keep him by her side by twenty little fond devices known only to an anxious mother's heart, as the long winter evenings drew in, and books, and harmless games, and endless story-tellings made those happy hours till bed by far the shortest of the day;—and, ere he lay his head upon his pillow, did her mother's best, too, to make him feel, as well as know, the great fundamental law, Heaven's own! on which, like the key-stone to the arch, all the rest depended, and took its certain value.

Ah, yes—that—that was it! Had those dear, watchful eyes not been closed for ever—those prayerful, pains-taking lips untimely silenced—that guardian, guiding hand palsied by death,—what might he then have been?—instead of the selfish, sensual, senseless wretch that pitying gaze there seemed to look down and tell him that he was.—Fool!—fool!—What would he now give for that kind, gentle, generous Mentor at his side?—to whom to unburthen all his soul, and enjoy the comfort at that moment of a kindred heart. Yes, he had been a better man, had he had kindred heart to

love, and be beloved by fondly in return. What heart but *one* had ever loved him?—loved him with a pure, whole, unselfish flame? Had *he* no heart as well as others?—why not? Was it the stone it *seemed?*—was it *incapable* of love? Love—love?—Oh! yes—how ardently, how devotedly! And be *beloved too?*—why not?"—and, wrapped, seemingly, in the reflection the question had induced, that ill-used heart held silent commune for a moment with itself. "Why not?—*To-morrow—to-morrow*, perhaps, would show. By that time she knew all—the die was cast—his fate, for weal, or woe, by then was sealed. He knew her generosity. She would not keep him in suspense. If she could not bid him rejoice, she was too noble-natured to give needless pain. Yes—*to-morrow!* Why not? She could never be Lady Fitzherbert—that hope was past for ever. *To-morrow!* Yes. Would that another day were gone! Should *he* return—should even a line come that fondly breathed her name—should those securities fail"—and Nugent Harvey's eyes fell on the rug as the thought crossed him—"should they—and—and—their house—ah—hark!"—

The rattle of a hackney carriage in the next street recalled the wandering brain to itself again. The time-piece on the mantel-shelf struck ten. Could it be? Impossible! An hour had flown, and it seemed but as a moment. "Hark!—how late they were!"—

A cab stopped at the door. There was just time to swallow another bumper—snatch up a book—assume a half-sleepy posture;—and enter Houghton Palmer and Charlie Ferrers.

The reader has already a slight knowledge of Captain Charlie Ferrers. Charlie was altered a good deal since we last saw him, increased in bulk to such an extent we could hardly believe our eyes. An increase, we regret, we could not congratulate him on—seeing that it added considerably to his inconvenience, and nothing, in our judgment, to his charms. It might be our bad taste, and because of our own personal antipathy to fat folks. Charlie did not seem to see it in the same light, 'twas evident; or, if he did, it caused him, apparently, little grief, to judge by that still saucy, swaggering gait, that roaring laugh, and rogueish rollicking eye. And, yet—there was *that nose* still there. What a nose! We have never seen but two, its equals. It was something really formidable that jolly nose! with its full-blossom, blushing honours thick upon it. There was no measuring it by any given standard, it was clean out of all common rule of line or compass. It arrested you at every turn, you couldn't get out of the way of it if you would, it held—it downright fascinated you that nose! You'd have given the world to look another way—see if you could.

There was a time when that nose was terribly in

Charlie's way—it bothered him exceedingly, more than he chose to own. But habit wonderfully reconciles us to sights and sounds 'twould have blanched, or blushed our cheeks once up to the ears the very thought of. You may sleep under a cataract and not hear it, and eat Cayenne pepper and drink Cognac till they go down soft as milk. And Charlie had looked that nose steadily in the face till he did not see it. It may seem surprising, but so it is—Charlie Ferrers knew less, in fact, of his own nose now than the most careless of his friends. True, Charlie was getting very fat, and, possibly—but comparisons are odious;—at all events Charlie still continued to 'love good ale and wine,' snapped his fingers at his nose, and, though he took to tea instead of claret, latterly, for breakfast, still 'kept it up' in roaring style—missing his nose more every day; till at last, resolved, he dressed himself one day, full courting fig, and throwing himself again at Cousin Rachel's feet—oh heavens, what a sight! For nearly twelve months they had never met. As he knelt—yes, knelt—poor Charlie caught a glimpse of himself in the pier glass, or, rather, of his woolly hair and eyes and nose, and Rachel's sorrowing gaze fixed sadly on him; and, leaping to his feet—while the veins in his temples swelled till they almost burst—without uttering another syllable, rushed headlong from the house; since when he had snapped his fingers more and more, they said,

whether at his nose, or Cousin Rachel, little matters, perhaps at both. There might have been more meaning in it, and sent the dagger to her heart in good earnest, had he cut it off outright, and been revenged. But, then, Charlie boy without his jolly nose? No, Charlie "knew a trick worth two of that.—Would spite her still —go, take the pledge—and marry Ellen Mowbray."

But there were times when Charlie's heart, spite of his finger-snapping and bravado, smote him sorely! And then he would jump up, and stamp, and storm, and pace the room, and wring his hands, and tear his hair, and beat his forehead like a lunatic; then, sinking again despondingly on his chair, hide his great bloated face—once handsome—in his hands and, giving way, cry like a child;—then, up again, and tear, and swear, and curse, and blaspheme—it was terrible to see and hear him! till, the fit over, he would sink exhausted on his bed, or on the floor, and, falling off, cry in his troubled dreams on Rachel—Rachel!—the only name amidst his madness, that, while it tortured, oh how keenly! seemed ever to bring him to himself—to leave a hope that he had any grace yet left.

The first glance sufficed to shew practised eyes like Nugent Harvey's, that Charlie, as he dropped heavily into his chair, was a cup that night too low. Charlie stretched his hand towards the neck of the decanter nearest him.

"Stay," said Harvey, rising and pulling the bell, "let's try the *Romanée*."

Charlie's eyes brightened; and, drawing his chair nearer the table, he picked away lustily at some early strawberries that seemed to take his fancy. So, while Gifford is getting the *Romanée* up, allow us, courteous reader, to introduce to you Mr. Houghton Palmer, who is standing elegantly, with one dress boot over the other, leaning an elbow on the mantle-piece, and playing, 'twixt his left thumb and fore-finger, with the Brequet seal-key hanging from the little watch-pocket next his heart.

Mr. Houghton Palmer is, as we would fain flatter ourselves the attentive reader already knows, an attorney-at-law; one of that highly necessary class of her majesty's subjects whose hard lot it is—poor souls!—to feed and fatten on the sins and sorrows of their species. Painful thought! involving many saddening reflections. And this may partly account for why that very ill-used, class! wear, nine tenths of them, such characteristic faces. And enough to make them. Do you think they have no consciences?—no souls like others to be saved? Is there no day of Judgment for *them* as well as for you and us—no day of reckoning when the uttermost farthing must be paid? Nonsense! we know better. They *are* to be pitied, greatly pitied! There is one thing, Providence is merciful! Fits the back, too, to the burden. The

drilling necessary to make an attorney has this singular peculiarity—while it opens the understanding, it, somehow, wonderfully ossifies the heart, or how poor conscience would ever be able to come off under it, it is quite impossible to say. 'Tis a truth passing strange, that, whereas, while most other professions take grace to themselves for more or less solicitude of moral culture in their educational programmes, the Law, or, rather—we humbly beg pardon—that highly useful department of it which has to do, in especial, with the construction of attorneys, in its concern for the head, seems to care, by all appearances, about as much for the *heart*, as did good Esther Lawton, when about her picklings and preservings—for the pips and seeds Hopkins tossed by handfuls to the hog-tub; and, yet, by what measure shall be meted the precious fruits thus cast in embryo by cart-loads to destruction?

But this is very ill-bred behaviour to Mr. Houghton Palmer, who is standing making his very best bow to you, courteous reader, all this time.

Mr. Houghton Palmer is a gentleman of some forty-five years of age. He may be a year or two more, or less—we are not sure. He wears his own black hair, scarcely yet grizzled even about the temples; has a bold, high forehead; well marked brow; good aquiline nose, rather a large mouth; but shewing, when he smiles, a nice even set of teeth; and ample cheek and chin. He stands some five

feet eleven without his shoes, with breadth of chest and back might floor a bullock. Yet, there is no lack of grace in Mr. Houghton Palmer. On the contrary, a more gentlemanly, pleasing, pleasant-spoken person, when in humour, is not on the Rolls than Mr. Houghton Palmer. It is quite a mistake to suppose, because a man has a pair of black bushy whiskers, and an eagle's eye, he can't be meek. We have known many a rough, bluff, brigand looking fellow, frightening all the world, but the women, almost into fits to look at him; let him only open his mouth,—and that little excuse for a man, swelling it up Regent Street there, with the glass in his tortured left eye and the huge blackthorn in his little fist, is not a more harmless little animal than he.

A melodious voice is a great acquisition to its owner. There is nothing like it for finding the way to the heart. It beats good looks, and they are worth having, hollow. We expected, ourselves—who know a thing or two of the odd whims of physiology—when we first came *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Houghton Palmer, to hear a voice by no means of the softest. For once in our life we were out. It was almost as if we listened to Velluti. For several moments we could hardly command ourselves, so much were we enchanted, but sat transfixed, and the charmer revelled in his power over us. Then, a delicate, white, well-formed hand is such a card! especially

with a monster diamond on one little finger and a massive signet on the other. Tell us, who would not be vain of such marks of gentle breeding?

Now, look any way you like at Mr. Houghton Palmer, as he stands gracefully leaning before us on that handsome rug, with one arm on the mantle-piece, and one patent polished boot toe over the other, displaying to the best advantage that tall, well-knit figure, while calmly contemplating, with a shade of somewhat deeper thoughtfulness than usual, Charlie, busy with the strawberries; and say, candidly, can you see a trace of the man of business in any shape in Mr. Houghton Palmer? No, not a bit of it! Don't he look made for regimentals? Can you believe he is an attorney? Has he the cut of one, turn him round as you will—the cut of one, gentle sirs, after the vulgar mould? Does he think he has himself? Couldn't he carry a sword, now—carve a haunch—drive four in hand—and come in at the death with the Surrey hounds three times a week with the very best of them? What matters who makes his clothes—Stultz, or Buckmaster? They are tip-top, as you see—the gentleman all over! We happen to know for certain that Hedges builds his boots, and Beale the honour has to be his mercer. Now, look again. Would you suppose he ever did a hard day's work in his life; except on the Scotch moors, or lochs, or down at Castlemore, or

in Lord Rattleborough's covers at Rattleborough? Attorney! Never was there such an error! And, yet, error though it be—never harder day's work, sweet reader, did hard-fagged poor attorney on the rolls achieve than elegant Mr. Houghton Palmer had gone through that day.

And so Nugent Harvey seemed to think, as he noted at a glance his jaded look, and, filling his glass with the *Romanée*, and pushing across the bottle to Charlie; "come," said he, cheerily, "what's it to be to-night, Charlie boy? Something proper, mind you."

"Proper! Ask Palmer," growled Charlie, poising an enormous strawberry between the points of his fore-fingers, in evident admiration, before putting it in his mouth.

"Well, if you won't," said Harvey, brimming his glass; "here's for you both—success to the wish nearest and dearest! will that do?"

"First chop!" cried Charlie, repeating the toast, and emptying his glass at a gulp.

"Coming from such lips, I think we may drink that," smiled Houghton Palmer, "with the greatest propriety."

"Who'll take me a ten pound, I don't know what's running in Charlie's head?" asked Harvey.

"Fifty, by G—! you don't then," hiccuped Charlie, catching breath as he drained his third glass.

Those *Romanée* glasses were very deceptive—hold-

ing, as Charlie filled them, nearly three of the usual slender cone-port wines. They played havoc with a bottle. But then they were such beauties, those belled glass-cups on their delicate straw stems. How the rich wine shewed itself in them—what a bouquet—what a colour—what a flavour!—to lose a particle of which, for want of the due *savoir faire*, would have been crime indeed!

"What but one thought *should be* running in his head to-night?" asked Houghton Palmer.

"Yes, what, indeed?" echoed Charlie, raising his rolling eyes for a moment to Nugent Harvey's, and then dropping them on his plate again.

"Cousin Rachel's the heart? Poh!" said Harvey. "Tell me, indeed—tight lad like Charlie Ferrers going begging?"

"He—he—he! Do you think, then, I couldn't, eh?" giggled Charlie, twitching his nose—an old, odd habit he had—till his eyes shot fire.

"Couldn't! Of course he could," laughed Houghton Palmer—"if he *would*."

"What?" asked Harvey, wandering for an instant.

"Ask and have, to be sure," said Palmer. "Easy enough that."

"Easy, yes," smiled Harvey; "and thank you, too, I'll warrant, by and bye."

"Dash my buttons, then!" cried Charlie, grasping the neck of the bottle in his fat fist; "see if I ever

take again—for any woman under heaven—to that cursed tea! Look, how it's shattered me!"

"Not for any woman?" smiled Palmer, incredulously. "I know better. Not for sweet Agnes Sommersley?"

"That stuck-up, pocked-marked poker?" cried Charlie, with a shrill whistle. "Oh, my poor head! How much?"

"On the nail? Twenty Thousand.—Fact!"

"That's all? Sure now? Don't deceive me, ever so."

"And as much more at Aunt Lizzy's death—fact again!"

"Ah! How old—the old un? Whew!—coming seventy-two? Tough old stick. Thank'ee. No—think not. Greatly obliged all the same. No go. Needn't trouble. Let's see—twenty? Double it—and no—blow me tight, then, if I would!"

"Noble heart! isn't!" exclaimed Nugent Harvey. "Thought as much. True blue to the back-bone. Always said so?"

"How about Blanche Plympton?" ventured Palmer.

"Her health in a bumper, if you please," responded Charlie, suiting the action to the word. "Ravishing creature! Stunning partner, bless her—for a polka. Little wife—excuse me kindly."

"Ah, little Ellen Mowbray—that's the figure!"

"Dear little duck of a heart!" cried Charlie,—"she shall have a bumper, too."

"No nonsense about *her*, is there?" said Harvey. "None of your *extra* superfine, stiff, stuck up airs and graces about Ellen; none of your fastidious, fussy, lack-a-daisical, die away little ladies, faint at the fumes of a glass of grog, eh, Charlie? or if a fellow blows a cloud, or happen to rap out a naughty word by accident—not Ellen. Something like a little wife that!"

"That's your sort," cried Charlie; "that's your cattle to get over the road—stick to it up hill and down, through thick and thin—rough and smooth—round the rough corners—all work alike to them—up to the collar—no flinching, by Jove!—carry you safe over—game to the last—pitch into them as you will—good heart, good—heart—that's it—never sick, nor sorry—that's your cattle!"

"That's it!" echoed Harvey, "good heart—good heart—that's it!"

"Dash my buttons! but she deserves a *magnum*, then, don't she?" hiccupped Charlie, brimming up again.

"A *magnum*? Half-a-dozen," cried Palmer, pushing the decanter over to Harvey.

"Noble heart! And not a rap," said Harvey. "That's so noble! Cousin Rachel must feel *that*. *That* must cut her to the quick."

"He, he, he—ha, ha!" giggled Charlie. "Mustn't it?—yes, mustn't it?"

"I'd think twice about it, though, I fancy, if I were Charlie," advised Palmer.

"Well, there's no accounting for your *penchants du cœur*," observed Nugent Harvey. "Of course, Charlie knows best how far he's pledged. Devillish nice girl! and all that sort of thing. Pity, rather, she wears those blue gogs; but that can't be helped. Devillish nice girl! Never mind about the tin—can't have everything. But hang me—and that's candid—if I should like—handsome chap like Charlie—to be looking blue, then, always in my wife's eyes—

> "What is your fortune, Sir?" she said.
> "My *face* is my fortune, my pretty maid."

"Ha, ha, ha!—he, he, he!" roared Charlie, rubbing away at his nose. "Blue? Oh, my poor head! Better blue—he, he, he!—better blue, by G——, any day,—he, he, he!—than *black*."

"Would I, though—that's all?" joined in Harvey, in the tone of one who is talking mechanically, to drown thought; "would I, that's all—look blue, or black either, by George!—with a pretty face like that would make my fortune? Won't do—all gammon! Well he may blush. And old friends, too; devilish artful, isn't it?"

"What's there to blush at?" wondered Palmer.

"What, indeed? He ought to be proud as Jupiter. Ha, ha, ha!—he, he, he!"

"All gammon," went on Harvey. "Takes the pledge, after all, for a thousand, and sticks to Rachel."

"He, he, he!—Possible."

"Great mind!" exclaimed Harvey.

"He, he, he! isn't it? Tip us your fist, old fellow. Big enough to be little—that's the ticket!" cried Charlie, hooking towards him the waggon with the fresh bottle Gifford had just brought in. "Big enough to be little! Gently, though—gently. I'll tell you what—it's—it's—old chap—a capital glass of wine this, by G——. Ah, you drink claret? Not the slightest objection—if it agrees. Body some, eh, in this? by Jove! D—— your clarets!—

"When the heart of a man is oppressed with care,
Off it flies like a shot when the *Romanée's* there."

"Gently, though. Mind, there's this to be said, gents, for the pledge," continued Charlie, after slapping down his empty glass, and breaking it off at the stem;—"there's this—and that's convenient, isn't it—to be said—it's not ir—re—irrevocable? A course of temporary abs—abstinence—that's it—don't you see that?—may be—of course—as advisable—don't you see—as advisable, as a course of—bitters, by, by Jove!—or a course of ba—bathing, I say—there's noth—nothing morally degrading in that?"

"Hear him!" cried Harvey.

"But, d—— me! then—that's what I say—d—— me, if a man's better than a be—beast—say as you will—better than a beast—who can't walk straight—straight—d—— it—on his legs—like a man, I say, —rational being—without old father Mat—

confound it—to help him along—blow me tight if he is—say as you will."

"My opinion precisely," agreed Harvey.

"Nothing can be clearer," responded Palmer.

"Clearer? Gently. Excuse me if you please," growled Charlie, sinking his voice to an almost inaudible grunt. "Clearer? I say—tell me—a man need be a beast?"

"Not the slightest necessity in the world for it, that I can see," considered Palmer.

"I say—need a man look *blue*, either—*blue?*—Answer me that."

"Depends," smiled Harvey.

"Depends, does it?" repeated Charlie, huskily—"depends? Then, d—— me! if I wouldn't—and that's flat—wouldn't rather a d——d deal—look blue, by G——! than *black*—d'you hear that?"

"Come," said Palmer, as Gifford put spirits and hot water on the table for the "farewell," after the usual mode at Mr. Nugent Harvey's convivial trios,—"just one loving glass, a-piece; and, then, fare-ye-well."

"By George!" cried Charlie brightening up, as he dropped the sugar into his tumbler. "Come a trump up, my boys, one of these days—I'll shew you how Charlie Boy can do it. Give him a chance, by Jove! that's all—eh—chance—and—I say, old fellows—won't he—that's all—won't he—shew you, my boys!"

"How to make cousin Rachel's shiners fly like lightening," laughed Harvey. "We'll be bound for it!"

"Ten per cent—wasn't it—ten—te—ten, you said, for it?" mumbled Charlie, his head nodding—"te—te—ten? Gently—very well—now mind—ten—te—ten;—done, old fellow—done! No flukes, eh? All right? That's your sort. Gently—d—— it—*blue*, was it? Te—ten, per cent, eh?—he, he!—don't you wish—you may get it? *Blue*?—he, he!—blue is it? See any gree—gr—green in Charlie Boy's eye? —green—green—" and, falling back in his chair—

"Fine exemplification of his own moral there," said Nugent Harvey, *sotto voce*, and shrugging his shoulders to Houghton Palmer. "Now, then, to business, and quick! What could have induced you to bring him here to-night?"

"Necessity. He came whistling up to the door as I got into the cab; heard where I was going—'just where he was going too'—jumped in,—what could I do?"

"What you did. Best as it is. Now we know he won't make a bigger fool of himself than he is already, with Ellen Mowbray. Must keep him up to Rachel. But, what news?"

"The devil's in everything?

"Always is when he's most wanted. Obliging very. Can he help us, that's the point, at this pinch?"

"Shall know better to-morrow?"

"Have you hope? Don't deceive me. You are not wont to be over sanguine."

"The bond is terrible!"

"The emergency no less so."

"Those securities? What's to be done?"

"Heaven knows only, if you don't."

"And Lady Fitzherbert's?"

"All right enough, there—*with time.*"

"You think so?"

"Sure of it."

"When will you know, for certain, from Miss Gordon?"

The Banker's lips slightly quivered. "To-morrow, I think; or next day at the latest."

"Hark! Is he safe? Sure? He moved, I thought."

"As the sleep of death. Safe—the snoring beast! yes, for the next six hours, trust him."

"Should to-morrow fail us—and—and they *press* for those securities?"

Nugent Harvey bit his lip.

"Do you think they will?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"And we can't do anything with the others?"

"Just so."

"It's all up with us, then, that's all," and Nugent Harvey fixed his gaze on his mother's picture for a minute. "*Vincimur!—Peccaverunt* Saints and

Angels. *Peccaverunt*—who'd have thought?—*Mirabilissime dictu!*—wonders will never cease!"

"Confound it! no—not so bad as that. Not while I know it, and there's a shot in the locker left."

"Not *while*—no, no—not *while*," grimly smiled Harvey, squeezing the offered hand. "Hang me if I know, and that's fact, what *is* left."

"Let's see. Yes, Lady Fitzherbert wants those other shares, don't she?"

A darker shade settled on Nugent Harvey's face.

"And those bonds, too?—Nonsense—*there's* eighteen thousand."

Banker Harvey remained listening, every now and then glancing impatiently at the snoring form of Charlie.

"Of course—nail those—that will be easy enough." went on Palmer, *sotto voce*.

"What?—those?—which?" asked Harvey, starting.—"What the devil's that?"—and, as the words were on his lips, the blood left them pale as parchment for an instant.

A sharp ring at the street door bell, violently repeated, at last brought Mr. Gifford from his evening doze; and presently after, much to the relief of his master, into the room with a note on a silver waiter, requiring an immediate answer by the bearer,—which, none the less urgent for its brevity ran as follows:

"Eaton Square, Thursday evening.

My dear Harvey,

The present brooks no delay; so, apologies are unnecessary for breaking in on you at this unconscionable hour. We want your head. Angel can do nothing with them. G—, too, presses. Step in, if you love us, and can, for ten minutes. I would come to you, but am tied by the leg with another sharp twinge. Suppose it's too late to get at Palmer to-night?

Heaven send this may find you in.

Ever yours,

FELIX SAINTS."

It might have been some half hour after Nugent Harvey and his confidential friend Houghton Palmer, arm in arm, turned off the step in the direction of Sir Felix's, and Mr. Gifford had descended again to his easy chair, when Charlie, shaking his great woolly head—his usual mode after a carouse when he wanted to collect his scattered senses—sat for a good ten minutes, seemingly endeavouring to recall something to his recollection, or to be resolving on some important purpose called for extraordinary nerve and caution in the handling; when, apparently determined, he rose suddenly from his chair—looked about him—yawned lustily—then, throwing the hair from off his forehead, snatched up his hat, and, glancing at

himself in the glass as he passed,—"*blue*, is it," muttered he to himself, as he slammed the street door to hard after him, and strode fiercely down the street. "*Blue*, by Jove! *Beast*—snoring *beast*, eh?—and the 'tight lad,' by Holy Friar Tuck! can carry his three bottles, still, under his skin, and never a wink, by George! *Blue*, is it? Snoring beast? Thought I was drunk. Softly there—softly over the stones, Master Nugent. Steady—steady man—don't be rash. Keep a civil tongue, can't you, in your head. *Blue*, is it?"—and fiercer and fiercer shot the sparks of fury from Charlie's rolling eyes. "*Blue* is it? Green call me, by G—, then, if somebody else won't look *blue*—precious *blue*—he, he, he!—before this time to-morrow, besides Charlie boy. *Blue*, is it—*blue*, by G——?"

To-morrow—to-morrow! How little dreamt many a to-morrow-hoping heart that stormy night, any more than poor Lady Edith's, of the far fiercer storms and trials awaiting them *to-morrow!* The season of care and precaution was passed for ever. Their all of hope and joy was alone centred in the future. To-morrow was their everything—they asked no more. On their ignorance alone hung the short remnant of their earthly bliss; and, yet, what would nine-tenths of them not have given, could they have been the wise fools—in mercy, not in anger—was denied them.

The Belgravia churches had struck two some quarter of an hour before Sir Felix's "ten minutes" had expired, and Nugent Harvey, having reached his own door, had wrung the hand of his professional adviser, and, with haggard face and trembling hand, let himself noiselessly in with his latch key.

It was Mr. Nugent Harvey's invariable custom to have, when out late, a night lamp always left burning for him on the hall table; as, visiting a good deal, it was frequently morning before he found his bed, and thus felt more at liberty than if his pleasures curtailed in anywise the lawful rest or recreations of his household. Attached to this household, or, rather, presiding over it, we should say, with much grace and skill, in the capacity of housekeeper at the epoch under notice, was a very good looking, nice-mannered, spirited, pleasant-spoken, yet young, woman of some twenty-eight summers, more or less, named Charlotte Lennox—the same charming Charlotte of whom we had occasion to speak, at the early part of our story, as fortunate mistress of a pretty bow windowed house in Jermyn Street, St. James's. Then, the reader may recollect, Mr. Nugent Harvey was her lodger, and an excellent lodger he was! though, as far as that went, the whole house might have been called his own,—and no less excellent a mistress, too, was Mrs. Lennox.

Charlotte Lennox was a widow. That was her

own fault alone. When Mr. Harvey went to live with her, she was in two minds—whether to make Oscar Blythe, her opposite neighbour, the great captain of the Twin-Mermaids Indiaman, the happy man he deserved to be, or consign him to despair. Charlotte referred her doubts and scruples to her lodger.

"So shortly after the death of her husband, he thought her scruples did her credit. Another voyage. What were two years, with youth like theirs? Absence made the loving heart grow fonder;"—and Oscar Blythe exchanged the last adieus.

Swimmingly went on things with Nugent Harvey; and Charlotte Lennox talked no more of Oscar Blythe.

It is astonishing to see by what slight chords natures, apparently, the most dissimilar, are often drawn in closest sympathies together. Nugent Harvey had never, in his recollection, when he came to know her, met with any woman who so thoroughly understood him—so hit the whim—so tallied with his bent—so fully realized what he admired most in her sex, as Charlotte Lennox; and Charlotte Lennox, though the first time she saw Mr. Nugent Harvey in her little parlour-back, she did not like him much, he seemed so very cold, and stiff, and ceremonious,—soon could see and hear and understood but with one pair of eyes and ears and understanding, and those were Nugent Harvey's.

And so matters went on smoothly and pleasantly enough; till, raised to his junior partner's chair at Saints and Angels, a change of residence was indispensable for Mr. Harvey. What was to be done? Comfort, without trouble, was every thing to Nugent Harvey. Charlotte Lennox made him comfortable, without effort, without fuss, without a moment's trouble of any kind. "It was really delightful, and so easy, to do for Mr. Harvey!"

"Was it? Then, the Jermyn Street lease was nearly out. If Mrs. Lennox found housekeeping more plague than profit, why continue it? How much did she say she had lost by it, the last two years? That would never do. There was Mrs. Grimshaw would take the lease and furniture at a fair valuation. There was a home—he hoped a good one—in Belgrave, if she liked to have it."

Charlotte Lennox "would consider it. Charlotte thought she should like it above all things. Belgravia had always been her sublunary paradise." Nothing easier than to strike the bargain. The gates of her earthly Heaven were won—and Charlotte Lennox blessed her lucky stars.

Charlotte was not only a handsome woman of the fair, florid, full-blown cast—she must have had no ordinary charms of mind and manners as well as person to have obtained and so long held, the mastery over such a man as Nugent Harvey. There

were some who said she was 'selfish, cunning, heartless.' If so, they must have had very penetrating eyes, indeed, to have fathomed a veil such a keen ken as his was insufficient to see through. At all events, Mrs. Lennox's rule was all absolute in the house; and if she was playing a deeper game than met the common eye, what was that to the world, if Mr. Harvey did not chose to see it?

Charlotte Lennox was a handsome, fresh, gay, light-hearted, agreeable woman; and, though usually grave and taciturn himself, Nugent Harvey liked those immediately about him to be bright and cheerful. She had seen something of society, took its modes and manners, had a sweet voice, and lady-like address; knew when to talk, and how, and, what was of no less consequence, when to hold her tongue. Her figure, for the full blown, was perfection! and she dressed it admirably. In truth, dress was a great study with Mrs. Lennox; but, as all she wore became her charmingly, though occasionally, may be, a little over done, who could have had the heart to find a fault? Certainly not Nugent Harvey.

Was Charlotte Lennox playing a deep game? Yes, a very deep one with such a slender hand.

To have had the command, even in a measure only, over such a mind as Nugent Harvey's, required something more than ordinary woman's power. This Charlotte Lennox saw. As a housekeeper, she might

do much; but, as a housekeeper only, after the common mould, nothing, literally nothing, with Mr. Harvey. How was it best to act? Take copy of himself—her cue from him—adopt his own rule—make herself mistress of his *weaknesses*—never allow *feeling*—and there was the chief danger, for, with all her ambition, Charlotte Lennox was but woman, and felt she could love as well as rule—never allow feeling to interfere with duty—the duty due to number one; what was expedient deem wise; and carry her point, be the difficulties what they might.

Charlotte Lennox had not listened to her oracle for nothing; never was steadier votary than she. What was expedient, nineteen times out of twenty was attainable with skill and perseverance; and what was attainable—if expedient—the end thereof, she thought, best justified the means.

So, thus armed and fortified, and it appearing expedient, as a preliminary, to make herself mistress of his most secret thoughts, Charlotte contrived by degrees to possess herself not only of the weaknesses of the inscrutable Mr. Harvey, but of a duplicate key to every nook and corner in which he placed his deepest trusts. This gave Mrs. Lennox great advantages; and no less consummate than her preceptor's was the tact and talent of his clever pupil.

What Charlotte Lennox's ultimate object was it is easy to divine. Though as yet it had assumed

no definite form even to her own mind, the bare outline only traced, hers was not the lazy art to leave the grand conception till it was worked out. It might turn out one thing, or another—a work worthy of her, or a worthless daub. Time would shew; and she was content to abide its issue, confident so far—that success depended altogether on herself. Of one thing she was perfectly conscious, and the thought, more perhaps than any other, though it often troubled, gave her also strength and purpose—as Mr. Harvey *rose* in the scale of wealth and greatness, she must *fall!*—unless—but dare she foster such a hope? "Yes, yes—that day come—and *her* to-morrow's sun of hope was set for ever! Rather than ever come that day, she would see him a penniless beggar, dependent on *her* labour for a crust. He should *never* rise to opulence—from his loftiness to cast her down. She had staked her all on the issue that was dearest to her on earth; and, if *she* was to fall, *he* should fall, too. The game was in her hands—the play her own;—one false move—Bella Gordon but say *yes*—and, so help her Heaven! he was lost—ruined—a beggar—bankrupt in all, but Charlotte Lennox."

The night lamp on the hall table was fitfully flickering out its last moments, from some carelessness of Mr. Gifford's, when Nugent Harvey let himself in; and, blowing it out as he passed into the library, he felt to breathe again more freely in the solitude of his own

quiet room. Savagely glancing at the chair in which he left Charlie Ferrers,—" beast," muttered he; and, breaking the lump of still live coal left with the poker, was rewarded with a cheerful blaze which seemed to comfort him. For a minute or two, as he stood with the poker still in his right grasp, his left holding the marble shelf, his eyes sought his mother's portrait. A deep sigh escaped him. Then, drawing a chair on to the rug, he sunk into it; and, burying his face in his hands, sat motionless, as if stupefied, for the space of half an hour.

It had been a stormy meeting of the partners at Sir Felix Saints'; the intervals between fresh doubts, and fears, and disclosures, and disasters being filled up with abortive explanations, angry personalities, and too late recriminations; and the wringing pressure of Houghton Palmer's hand, as they bade good night, fully shewed the fearful nature of the far more terrible storm that was at hand.

At length, rousing himself by an effort from the lethargy into which he seemed to have fallen, Nugent Harvey looked up from his deep commune with the ashes; and, consulting his watch, was summoning up nerve to go and seek in sleep a short respite from reflection, when he thought he heard a crack of the stair, and, in a moment after, a footstep cross the hall. Starting up, as the blood forsook his face and his heart smote him so he felt it almost choke him, he listened for an instant—when the click of the

street door latch, suddenly unhooked, caught his ear, and again a footfall distinctly in the hall. "S'death! in his absence, he had forgotten to spring the latch—thieves had got in—he should be murdered,"—and, snatching up the poker from the fender, hardly knowing what he did, he rushed behind the thick cloth window curtains; and, stilling the agitation, that sent the cold sweat standing on his forehead, as well as he could, waited breathlessly for whatever fate might send him next.

Not a minute had he to wait. In less time than he could have counted thirty, the door, which was ajar, was gently opened; there was, seemingly, a pause of a few seconds, as if to make sure, for caution sake; the gleam of a candle passed slowly along the wall, and Charlotte Lennox stepped into the room.

Nugent Harvey's first feeling, as he gazed from his concealment astounded on his housekeeper, was one of great relief; and he was about, in the sensation of safety it brought with it, to advance at once, and confess himself the abject coward that he was; but there was a something in her manner that kept him rivetted to the spot, so strange was it! "What? ah!—fiends!—did he see aright—or did his eyes deceive him."

In the corner, within three yards of where he stood, was the cabinet in which he kept his private papers—the very innermost secrets of his soul. The lock was patent, the key never, that he knew of, out

of his possession. "Was he in a dream? How—when—where—what, in hell's name, was the woman doing?" She took a key—not his key—impossible! that was in his waistcoat pocket—from her bosom. Fiends!—the lock yielded. She searched deliberately among his letters. Ah! heavens—replaced two—the two, most likely he had missed, and thought he'd lost—was disappointed in her search—re-locked the cabinet—was going thus—thus—and those—his eyes that saw it. Could it be?—was he mad—a fool—a coward? Should he out?—what palzied all his strength?—should he out—and strike her to the earth? what held him, like a skulking craven, to the spot? demons, demons tearing, tugging at his heart!—why cleaved the tongue to the roof of his mouth?—why couldn't he call to her—bid her—command her to stop—stop?"—and, staggering forward, he reeled, and measured his length heavily on the floor.

To-morrow! to-morrow! Already the first glorious tints of a cloudless sun-rise were ushering in to millions that *to-morrow*, as, at length borne to his bed, Nugent Harvey found in broken slumbers a short oblivion from his sorrows. "To-morrow—to-morrow!" still lingered on his lips, and to the tune of the sweet lullaby the bankrupt Banker dozed off; still, hopeless, hoping—as though the past day's cares were all life had to weep for.

Oh! can cloudless sun ever rise in joyous smiles like those, and have the cruel heart to set in tears?

CHAPTER VII.

"HOME SWEET HOME!"

"Oh, had I the wings of a dove,
How soon would I taste you again!"

WHEN Lady Fitzherbert, having exhausted Norton's cup of comforts that to-morrow-hoping night, at last lay her head upon her pillow, what was the last fond prayer she breathed, the last wish was as unction at her heart?—That "He would protect His own—that, ere another day, her boy, her first, her last, her precious one, her best, her only treasure! would be restored in safety to her arms." And what, amidst all their tears and lamentations at old Marksbury and Fernleigh that night of storms and troubles, was the thought that brought with it the surest balm to those no less fondly hoping hearts around the blank death-bed? The thought, too, of *to-morrow*. Let us now see, on what sure rock, or treacherous sand those fond prayers and expectations built their trust?

Let none stake their all on hope; let none despair. Often furthest off the prize that seems already within clutch; close at our elbow the object we would traverse the wide world to attain.

On the morning of the day we have been recording some events of relating to our story; after a miner's breakfast of damper, grilled mutton, tea boiled in a tin pot without a lid, and flavoured with brown sugar, without milk—a luxury, that sweet fresh milk, by no means so indispensable, Miss Mary, as you may think for—sat two young men, evidently, notwithstanding their rough, outlandish garb, and rougher present homely habits, of gentle blood, in one of the tinker-tents, somewhat apart from the rest, that in indiscriminate confusion dotted the wild slopes and levels up and down the various bends of the stream, where the valley, forming the bed of the river Turon—the "Pactolus of the Antipodes," as Colonel Mundy calls it, had gathered about its golden sands a motley host what pen or pencil could do justice to?

Here they were—mercy on us, what a mixture!—of all climes and creeds almost, blood, breed, grades, gustos, callings and characters;—magistrates, malefactors, cabmen, counsellors, merchants, mechanics, gentlemen amateurs, rocking the cradles just for the say of it, tailors, and court hair-dressers, cooks, cobblers, colliers, scavengers, and quarrymen, alder-

men, M.D.'s, lawyers, and lawyers' clerks, soldiers, sailors, authors, artists, butchers, bakers, clergymen, and costermongers; and—it's true as we are living—a real live Lord, too, dear reader—yes, a real live one, take our word for it, on his travels!—all thrown pell-mell together, hail fellow well met, by that great leveller, community of interests—what a *mélange!*

'Twas a soul-stirring sight, that rude, reckless, resolute little colony in that wild mountain glen. What a study for the physiognomist! Dress gave little of a distinctive character. The universal serge shirt, leathern belt, woollen comforter, and Californian hat, with the general contempt for "ablution and abrasion" would have puzzled a conjuror to point out, as far as costume went, a "live Lord" from a labourer. Physiognomy could do something, and that certain indescribable, that inseparable *je ne sais quoi*, which, under the roughest garb, bespeaks position; but, anyhow, appearances were not much to go by. Democracy—and there you had it in perfection—is a wholesale equalizer—Australian independence a very animal! In a state where community of pursuits and interests herded men of all classes and minds in one huge heterogeneous drove together, as on the Summerhill and Turon; where the countenance of your neighbour, on one side, was reckless and licentious as self-abandonment could make it; on another, dark, dull, dogged, and abstracted, as though

bent on some foul play, or deed of deadly purpose; on another, so grim, and gaunt, and ruffianly, and ruthless, that you instinctively turned to your bowie knife or pistols, it is not surprising there should have been little disposition for communicativeness.

Things are much altered now, and for the better, even where daring and desperation still muster strongest in the all absorbing and demoralizing quest. Let democracy, the rampant brute, have but its swing, and fear not. Sooner or later, see how it will come sueing with its own lips, loud and long, for that excellent rule of order and due government, the wisely graduated scale.

Then the gold digger gave you little chance of knowing him by his conversation. Talk was no part or parcel of his business. On the contrary, he resolutely avoided it, especially on the subject of his gains; and no wonder, seeing the precious nature of his earnings when he got them, and the stratagem no less than personal strength required to keep them when obtained.

As far as nature's work went, nothing could be more picturesquely grand, of the sort, than the bold and varied features of the wild, romantic country that introduces to the Turon. Immediately bordering the river, it is less rugged and pent in than on the Summerhill Creek. The bed of the stream, too, is much wider, along which poured the turbid torrents that

brought down the gold dust for the gathering, thickest often among the grass-tufts of its muddy banks. Indeed, few sights could have been more agreeable and inspiriting, after the toilsome passage of the Lewis, than when, topping the last ridge, you looked down into the beautiful and tranquil valley of the Turon, under a bright sky and bracing breeze, with its busy, hardy, earnest little colony dotted thick along its banks; and, as you descended upon the creek, listened, if for the first time, astounded, to the ceaseless and deafening crash, "like the rushing of some mighty cataract, as Munday says, of the eternal grating of the gravel or rubble on the metal sifters of some hundred rockers," produced by the simultaneous agency of a mass of human beings, not one of whom, as you gazed down, transfixed, into that wild mountain glen, was visible, nor any sign nor symptom, save the noise they made, of their existence.

But what need of description? Is it not, all of it, patent all the wide world over? So, though strongly tempted by more than one picturesque group would delight us could we make immortal, we must resist; and, crossing the stream, as well as we can get over without pitching headlong into a pit, to the bank opposite, running up as pleasant a sloping hill prettily timbered as Hampshire could produce, halt on the threshold of an abode rather more solid, and snug-looking, and comfortable than its neighbours; before

which burnt away a large log fire, whereon hissed and sputtered a frying-pan beside a smoking tin pot, in present care of a young man, whose features, as far as could be seen of them under his slouched hat, and shaded by the thick, tangled, raven curls that fell in profuse clusters almost to his shoulders, were of the first order of gipsy-beauty, had they been only well washed and the clustering curls allowed a brush and comb.

In the interior of the camp, as we have said, sat two other young men, apparently of gentle blood, moody and taciturn after their breakfast; except when, every now and then, the younger would call impatiently to Claude, outside with the frying-pan—forgetting, we suppose, that Claude, whatever else his sufferings might be, deemed that he had earned his morning meal, too, and suffered, moreover, nothing from dyspepsia,—and desire him "to be quick! for he meant to have another try before dinner at the Point, where, but yesterday, a low, dirty fellow, with nothing hardly to boast of but his muscle, had shovelled out into a canvas hand-barrow enough, before nightfall, to keep him drunk for six months at least; more, by George! ten times told, than he'd have got by honest labour at home in half as many years."

His companion made no answer; but, continuing to pare and beautify his finger nails with a pen-knife, sat with one leg indolently thrown over the other,

seemingly in no hurry for the promised undertaking.

"You may do as you like," continued Clermont Onslow, rising, and snatching up his hat. "I shall go down again with Claude, and have another try at it. There's more gold there, go deep enough. Look at the Chisholm party—washed thirty ounces yesterday. And the Groffs, last week—eighteen pound weight—easy, too; a hundred and fifty pounds sterling clear gain, each man, by jingo!"

"By jingo! yes," said Cecil,—"and beast of burden work it is, sweet cousin Clermont."

"How do you know?" smiled Clermont. "You don't call yours work?"

"Don't I though? What do you call it, pray?"

"I'll tell you when I come back, my boy, to-night."

"I can tell you without budging an inch, my cousin dearest."

"Ah! the old tune—Walter Pemberton's 'showers of ready roasted muttons, with lots of gravy.'"

"By George! I wish they'd come, then. Not quite that, pardon me. Look at these hands."

"Ay, look! You may well be ashamed of them. At this rate, when shall we ever shew our faces again at dear old Marksbury?" and Clermont sighed.

"When? With all possible dispatch, I vote," replied Cecil, ruefully contemplating his left thumb and fore-finger.

"Without enough for a thimble and gold tooth-pick? See if I do, then!" fired Clermont. "To be quizzed, and laughed at, for two butter-fingered spooneys by the whole village? no, never! I tell you. We've not saved a day's work yet, with all the gleanings, let alone the Vicar's toothpick and Esther's thimble. I tell you, there's gold, and lots of it, about the 'Point,' to make a fortune."

"Not a day's work? Diavolo!" stared Cecil. "Look there," pointing to under the bed—"enough and over—unless we've spent it—to pay all costs home—melt down and make the girls each a splendid pair of drop earrings—Esther and Mammy dear, and Aunt Lucy a life-locket a-piece—the Vicar a gold snuff-box, too, by Jove! call that nothing?"

"That enough?" cried Clermont, snapping his fingers—"grant we had it—to set the old bells pealing again, the whole ox roasting, the bonfires blazing, the ale-taps flowing, and all hearts over head and ears with joy for twenty miles around? That enough, think you, eh? to pass muster with Aunt Gerty, and old Huntworth—let alone old Tabby, and Sam and Mrs. Rodney?—Oh! dare I then? And hundreds making, as easy as one o'clock, as Claude says, their twenty pounds a-day, a-man, and more, many of them, than that. Marksbury's not wide awake? Trust the post every day for that. By Jove! there's a nugget—you mind what I say—to come out of the old claim yet, I know, will astonish them

one of these fine days. Roland Chisholm's got his eye on that—trust him—to jump in, when we jump out."

"Let him jump," said Cecil, leisurely commencing with the right thumb. "And for joy, if he can, cousin dear—up to the middle in that vile hole."

"As you please. *Qui fugit molam, fugit farinam,*" reminded Clermont, buckling on his belt.

"*Ne tentes, aut perfice,* pardon me," suggested Cecil. "Oh, my poor head!" as Charlie says. "What *amandine* will ever bring back these hands—tell me that, cousin sweetest—to their pristine hue?"

"A month's idleness, and less—better than all Truefit's. Well, then, I'm off. You'll be sorry for it, mark my words! as Tabitha Ludlam says."

"And mark mine, too, cousin dearest," yawned Cecil, sharpening the penknife on his boot. "I'm off, too—home again—yes—to home sweet home! again, cousin sweetest, before another moon—come letters by then, or not."

"Strange, very! isn't it?" sighed Clermont, lingering a moment at the door porch, and looking out thoughtfully towards the 'home sweet home!' "Strange—not a line for so long?"

"Not strange a bit, cousin dearest. I'll bet you a hundred, Esther's got the kidney pasties, and Annie her brown patties, done to a turn, every day, now; and has had 'em, too, for the last three months—all ready, piping hot for us, expecting us

to drop in every moment. You know they have, you know it well, you monster!"

"I shouldn't wonder," smiled Clermont, his eyes still fixed on the far West. "Perhaps there are letters waiting now for us at Bathurst."

"Not unlikely at all. I'll ride over to-morrow, if I'm not tired, and see," promised Cecil, closely contemplating his little finger point. "There, now! that used to be a regular darling little filbert of a nail; and, patience! now look."

"Well, I'll tell you what, then," said Clermont, cheering up; "come what may—suppose we say, sell the cradle—and 'home sweet home!' again on Monday?"

"That's your ticket, my boy!"

"I'll have another try, though, to-day, anyhow. Don't know what the deuce ails me—but I'm precious down to-day."

"Take a pull at the flask. Down?—who the deuce isn't? And going to stand up to your ribs too, in that d——d hole for the next six hours, to make it better—the Quixote!"

"Must and will have another try, if I die for it," cried Clermont, calling to Claude. "I'll bet something's happening to-day at Marksbury — something—"

"Shouldn't wonder in the least, cousin dearest. No doubt—what—eh—why?—shrewd that."

"I feel so deuced down!"

"Ah! The thought of the brown patties. Quite natural, after those cursed dampers. They do, that's a fact, stick horridly. By the bye—wonder if Austin's got those almond tablets by now?"

"Then, you won't come?"

"Excuse me—I think not—not this morning. Gad! though—they begin, don't they, to look a little more like now? No—I think not this morning, thank you. Couldn't spare Claude, could you? There's Blinks, and Dawkins—nothing to do—glad of a job. In the hole, worth three of him, give them *raw* enough."

"Very well—if you like—that'll do. But mind there's something nice and hot for supper."

"Trust me."

"Better change your mind."

"By — bye. — Holla!—how much, eh, for the cradle, cousin Quixote."

"*Qui fugit molam, fugit farinam*, soliloquized Lord Fitzherbert, as he put the finishing touches to his right thumb. "Diavolo!—*No Pains, No Profit*? Faith! a most pithy precept," and his Lordship laughed. "*No Pains, No Profit*? Cospetto!—perhaps that *is* it. Up Cecil Fitzherbert—up man! why slumberest thou so long? and work to do, worth all the mines of Mexico! Claude—Claude!—hither ·st lad. *No Pains, No Profit*—up, lad, up

—there's work on hand, I say, to do, worth all the mines of Mexico! yet, honest Claude! we slumber. Up, up, you sluggard!" and, jumping to his feet, Lord Fitzherbert, yawning, went in search of honest Claude.

As yet the reader knows nothing of honest Claude but as the poor flower lad of whom Bella Gordon bought the wedding bouquet at the carriage step, that day when his piercing gipsy-eyes so attracted Lady Fitzherbert and drew the half crown with such alacrity from Bella's purse. A very few lines, and of the slightest, will suffice for Claude's portrait. His face, adorned with a profusion of clustering curls of the richest raven black, would have been, for the Italian mould, perfection! had he been one half as good as he was handsome. There was something in the expression of Claude's features, that, while it fascinated, did not wholly please you. The smile was irresistible, it rivetted you, you could not keep your gaze off it, but the frown was terrible. And the transition could be so sudden, so complete, it startled you. It was the beauty rather of a devil than an angel. It seemed to lure you, whether you would or not, within its wiles. You felt caught, but not held; surprised, but not convinced; while it won you, and made dizzy the brain, it sent no thrill of genuine pleasure to the heart; you saw that Claude had no fixed principle of good in him, was the victim

of impulse, all bright as heaven one moment, all dark as hell the next; you were sure that, if Claude could fondly love, as fiercely and fearfully could he also hate; you felt, it were safer far to have Claude for your friend than enemy; and, better still, of the two, as Paddy expresses it, 'were he neither.'

But Claude's heart could be susceptible of impulses the most generous; and, had he been left to the rule, and firm but kind treatment alone of Clermont Onslow, he had germs of promise in that hot-bed heart of his worth cultivating. How felt he towards his two young masters? For Cecil, adoration sometimes amounting almost to idolatry; then, the next hour, a burning hatred he could ill conceal; then, admiration again, and homage, and adulation the most servile, till he would almost kneel and kiss his Lordship's foot-print in the soil. For Clermont, often a feeling near akin to love—a love he had never felt for any other living soul; then, of pity; then, contempt; then again, of yearning love, esteem, and trust; then—turn the tide—of superlative indifference and scorn! An odd compound was that hot-bed heart of Claude's. A soil better fitted to the seeds he meant to sow Cecil could not have had; and sow them he did with no unsparing hand, and now was going to see, with what profits for his pains.

It seems, that Mr. Richards, the hall porter, spoke advisedly, when, having had his yawn as the carriage

rolled off, he recommended the lucky flower-lad to "go home, and wash his pretty face, and who knew whether it mightn't make his fortune some day?" Claude went home, and washed it—and from that hour Claude's lucky star had never failed him. Claude had not only taken advice, but was duly grateful for it, and Mr. Richards took him to his heart. It was plain sailing now with Claude, and with flying colours, too. There was no longer the load on Claude's heart, when he raised his head from his straw pallet of a morning, how he should achieve a breakfast—let alone dinner, tea, and supper, all of which Claude had once known in plenty, times gone by. And soon that straw pallet was changed for another guess sort of pillow—and sounder and sounder slept Claude each night under the wing of his good patron. Most men, great howsoever, have a weak point somewhere in their natures. Mr. Richards, though a very great personage in his way, pleaded guilty to the general infirmity. Mr. Richards, albeit hard-headed enough, had a soft heart, and Claude the quick eye to see, and clever sense to mould it to his purpose. Soon the tall, pink-calved pompous, powdered flunkies missed the poor flower lad from their area railings, and found another market for their bouquets; Claude's soul had taken a leap, and cleared them all with one astounding bound. And soon the fame of these piercing eyes

travelled further than the servants' hall. There seemed no limit to their lustrous power; till, reaching Lady Edith, even—how Mr. Richards managed it, he and Dinah Norton only know:—

"Ah, those eyes!—the very counterpart!" and, the portrait acknowledging an undenying 'yes;' "send the lad up," said Lady Fitzherbert. "An orphan is he; and a good lad, too? We'll see what can be done for him, poor youth!"

Lady Fitzherbert saw; and Bella saw; and Norton saw; and Mr. Richards saw,—and it would have been astonishing, indeed, if such merits as Claude's, which somehow grew more interesting every day, seen by so many discriminating eyes, should have failed of their reward. The portrait, too, had smiled undenyingly again one evening, when Claude's admiring gaze, by Bella's invitation, was fixed on it; and what more was required? True, Bella had not observed it; but, then, she might have been thinking more of its right hand neighbour, an admirable *Lawrence*, of Cecil, taken when he was a boy of twelve, with his hand on the flowing mane of Rob Roy, and Carlo bounding up and barking at his feet. Lady Edith *had*—plainly—palpably—as she sat on a low lounge chair, looking earnestly at the one, then the other; and Norton solemnly believed it smiled, too; so, Claude prospered, and Mr. Richards' pride was very great!

Claude is not the first, by many, who has made a fortune by a pair of lustrous eyes. They are wonderful captivators, those siren gipsy-eyes, playing the deuce with their deep witchery. Trust not too self-sufficiently to your wisdom, susceptible-hearted reader, within short range of their resistless fire. How they rivet you! And tell us, that under the fire of such beauteous eyes could burn aught but purest thoughts? that such love-beaming looks like those could emit a spark would singe even a hair of our head?—those devoted eyes, smiling now on us—for us only? Poh! Well may they flash fire at the thought! Wouldn't they suffer to be scooped from their sockets first?

"Have a misgiving," as Dinah Norton said, "with a pair of eyes like Claude's? Think that craftiness, or cruelty, or avarice, or treachery, or revenge, could lurk beneath sweet smiles like those? "Poh! What mattered it a jot about his history, what his parentage was, what fortune had done for him, what against? One way or other, was that his fault? Wasn't he an orphan? poor, parentless lad! Was that his fault? And if his father was a gentleman—if he had noble blood in his veins—if his mother— O, how exquisitely beautiful she must have been!—if his mother was an Italian, as they said—if he wasn't born, poor child! in wedlock,—was that his fault? If, left to the mercy of the storm—deserted—a foundling—he had been tossed by winds and waves about the wreck they

knew him—poor lad! was that his fault? Go, set the sin of that upon his head? Wicked! Was Dinah Norton wrong? Oh, those poor, piercing, imploring, hungry eyes! How often had she watched them with aching heart from her window, and sent them out a lump of bread and jam, or cold pie, when nobody knew it but herself. Was Dinah Norton wrong? What was their *duty*?—she asked that — their bounden *duty*? Wasn't it, to provide for the widows, and the fatherless, and those who had none to help them? Of course it was, as Mr. Richards said; and, let her tell him—such sentiments did honour to his heart."

So, Claude prospered in right earnest. And good Vaughan and Lady Fitzherbert were puzzling their heads one day how to do the best for him, when, as good luck would have it, the Australian trip turned up. The very thing! Just what they would both want—a trust-worthy fellow to attend them as faithful servant and *factotum*—the very thing! Norton should sound him; and, if he liked the thought, leave all the rest to munificent Lady Fitzherbert.

Liked the thought? Yes, amazingly! did Claude. And, "though it would go near to break his heart, to say good bye to Dinah Norton and Mr Richards—it was his duty—wasn't it—in gratitude—his duty—to —to?" "Yes, yes, it was. And though it would no less go near to break their hearts, too, to lose him;

though the house wouldn't seem the same when he was gone, no, nothing like it—yes, it *was*—it *was* his duty—and—and—"

"And—if he found a nugget—and why shouldn't he?" sighed Claude.

"Why, indeed?" sighed Dinah.

"If he found a nugget—then—then—" and the assuring pressure of that farewell grasp thrilled for many more months after in Dinah's heart than we can count—"what would riches be to him?—unless—unless shared, by her—whose—;" but the impatience of Lord Fitzherbert to be off cutting short the blissful rest, poor Dinah had to fill up the broken sentence as best she might—perhaps none the unhappier, for having her own hoped-for day of joy *to come*, as well as others.

Lady Fitzherbert was right—it *was* "just the thing!" Nothing could have pleased Cecil better. He saw at a glance that Claude would suit him excellently well! and no pains should be spared, on his part, to make him all his Lordship could desire. Claude, too, was perfectly content. The bargain hit his wishes to a T. Claude was a vagrant in his heart, loved liberty, ease, good living, and sound slumbers without labour; moreover, though indolent, was ambitious, and here was a chance open to him, to be another Crœsus for the stooping.

"Here, indeed!" smiled Lord Fitzherbert to

himself. "A Crœsus ?—yes,—he shall be, honest Claude !"

What precise steps took Lord Fitzherbert with his orphan *protégé*, to do honour to his mother's generous wishes, from the hour he became his responsible guardian and adviser, to the moment when, having finished the nail-parings, he leaped from his seat to go and see what probable '*profits* for his *pains*' there were—it is not our present purpose to inquire. Nor would it, that we can see, be any interest to the reader to be detained here with the particular sayings and doings of two such green youngsters in life's race as Cecil Fitzherbert—although a Lord—and Cousin Clermont, the next remove from one,—going over the old well-beaten track, as patent to the world as sun and shade. Suffice it to say, therefore, whatever steps they were, they had evidently led, as yet, to no very grand results; and it might be on this account, his Lordship was moved to go "take stock," in phrase commercial, and ascertain what *profits* for his *pains*. That he calculated on the balance being in his favour would appear likely, by his unclouded brow and careless air, though no man could more perfectly master his feelings, when it suited him, than Lord Fitzherbert; and we, who know him well, should be much surprised to learn—that, in things mundane, Cecil Fitzherbert had, ever, seriously, intended to hurt himself.

It was a damp, drizzly, cheerless evening, as, the dusk closing over them, the diggers one after the other threw down their picks and shovels, and, loath enough, as the light failed them, gave up, per force, for the night, their feverish search; and fairly having earned it, sheered off from their slavish toil to such comfort, as, under care of their less active co-partners, awaited them in their rude huts, sprinkled, here and there, thick as mushrooms, over the slopes running up above their various *claims*.

Home is home, be it ever so homely; and brighter shone the eyes, and lighter went the steps as the Gold-Slaves caught sight of their own roof trees. There blazed away the cheerful log fires to welcome them from the wet, cold holes; there were hissing and sputtering the gridirons and frying-pans; there in the tin pot smoked the grateful tea; while the dampers, as Mundy says, "kept themselves warm upon the cinders;" there were the clean, dry clothes, and cozy blankets; there the supper, and sleep, to nerve them for the trials of the morrow; there, in a word, their home! and, where that is, where turns the saddest heart so certainly as there?

But the rain which had been falling more or less continuously for some days, so far from dispiriting the diggers, had given an extraordinary impulse to their efforts; for, with the turbid torrents, down came the glittering ore in such abundance, that the com-

motion about the Point, and up above for miles, and round about the Lower Wallabi was something marvellous! Several splendid prizes had been found since the morning; but, up to near evening, Clermont, though he worked like a navvy, had done little more than might melt down into a wee-brooch and lilliputian chain for Annie; till—for fortune comes as if brought by magic wand, all of a moment to the gold-digger—*jubilate—jubilate!*—stand back—stand back!—what have we here? Joy, joy!—Heaven save our staggering senses!—do we see right?—is it—can it be?—help—help—our brain reels—stand back—stand back—touch it not for the world—let us feast our eyes awhile! O, joy, joy!—yes, yes—now we see clear again—the film falls from our eyes—it is—it is—Gold—Gold—pure, precious, precious Gold!—oh, joy!—oh, joy! Quick now—this way—heave it up—ye Gods! what a monster mass!—take care—take care—hold—hold—lose not a grain, as you value your lives!—now, then—up—up—steady—steady! well done—now—quick, quick! or hungry eyes may see—quick!—that's it—again—up with it—in—in—that's it!—thank Heaven! *Ne tentes, aut perfice*, say you, sweet cousin Cecil? *Jubilate, jubilate!—perfecimus!* Joy, joy!—now sell the cradle then—now, *home sweet home!*—make haste—make haste—joy, joy—*perfecimus—perfecimus!*"

Merrily went many a wine cup round that memorable night on the banks of the Turon. Good fortune is a wonderful propeller. How the laziest will up and at it to the tune of it! Not a hand, the most delicate, but could hardly wait till morning light to try its new found muscle. Little fortunes might be amassed by dribblets, and no one but the lucky owners be the wiser. But, come a prize like lucky Clermont's, and keep it secret if you could, an hour. The Turon was mad again, in a delirium of excitement that beggars all description! Men, wise men in their own conceit, ran about like frantic from post to pillar with the news. Astonishment, and wonder, and incredulity, at first, soon gave way before the resistless force of stubborn truths. There was proof positive, and Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins to confirm the facts. It was a jolly day for Blinks and Dawkins—and Blinks and Dawkins made the most of it. Lord Fitzherbert stared as well he might, and, having no words at command to express his joy, contented himself with gazing, first, at the nuggets, then, at Claude—and, dumbstruck, held his tongue. Claude stared with gloating eyes, dumbstruck, too; but what his precise thoughts were not even Cecil Fitzherbert probably knew quite.

Up rose the next day's sun, the cloudless harbinger of joyous tidings to thousands of yearning hearts besides Clermont Onslow's. The load had vanished. Now they might set the bells ringing, and

the bonfires blazing, and the ale taps flowing. Yes, now he could return and face them, without a blush. Go to the diggings, and sneak back again with hardly a thimble and gold toothpick? Never! Oh! now fancy, how they'd all open their eyes. Fancy their astonishment—their delight! Now they could march back with colours flying. Now shouldn't he be a match for any of them?—upset Aunt Gerty the first round; put the Vicar clean out of court; make Esther's dear, old smiling eyes sparkle like little diamonds again; settle Huntworth with a blow; floor the Squire; and, as to sweet Selina and Tabby Ludlam—bless us and save us! what a delicious dish of gossip for dear old Tabby! And Walter Pemberton—only think what he would say! how he would leap, and laugh, and clap his hands, how his great, big, generous, open heart would overflow ten times more than if every shilling of it were his own! And poor Grogram! shouldn't he get a lift as sure as fate? And Lady Fitzherbert, and Bella Gordon—a Turon *souvenir* a-piece would just surprise them! And his dear, dear mother! did she think he had forgotten her? No, no!—God bless her!—she had never been an hour absent, since he left his last kiss on her dear lips, any more than Annie, from his thought. And Annie—O happiness, happiness!—but a few weeks more—he felt as if his heart would bust with joy!

"why this long silence? Had she been ill?"—

and the blood forsook his face as he spoke.—"Had absence made the heart grow *colder?*—No, no—'twas an unworthy thought—his heart smote him for it—and back came the colour again blushing to his cheeks. "*Promise!—why? For shame! for shame! Do I ask you for one.*" Oh, those dear words, engraven for ever on his memory! O sweetest thought on earth—Home—Home—Sweet Home! Once there again, would he ever quit it more? And Dan Dunlop, too,—and Ben—and Humphrey—and Dolly—and all of them—forget one of them? And dear old Nep, bless his old nose!—and Socrates—and Tom and Jerry—and Mr. Waddle—and Paul and Virginia? Oh, happiness! Would they had wings, and, leaving those hellish, hateful scenes for ever behind them, could roost at rest again that night in dear old Marksbury! That would be joy!

Patience, patience, heaving heart. Be still, be still! Nay, do not beat so fast! In thy joy, as in thy sorrow, learn the great lesson of life, would'st thou be wise, poor, anxious, heaving, heart!"

Would Clermont could have had the wings he craved! and, taking flight that sunny, smiling morn, have dropped a penniless beggar before nightfall into dear old Marksbury, rather than, for all the wealth of the world, he should, on his couch of gold, have had cause to curse the hour he ever left his happy little tent-bed at the Parsonage.

CHAPTER VIII.

Self Will. "I must—I will!"
Satan. "So Be It, my Lord—your devoted servant ever!"
DRAMA OF LIFE.

In the impenetrable fastnesses of his deep, dark mind, Cecil Fitzherbert, almost from the hour he first gazed enraptured, though without the visible emotion of a nerve, on Annie Lawton, conceived a scheme worthy of the great author of all sin himself. It was, at first, *in embryo*, but as a faint outline, an indistinct idea only, without precise form or feature of any sort, a vague conception, would turn out one thing or the other, an existing something. But that was enough. It *had* existence, called into being by no less a master will than Cecil Fitzherbert's; and, with such master power and skill to give it form, would, all in good time no doubt, come to the birth developed soon enough.

I will! It shall be so! had been Lord Cecil's *fiats* ever since his cradle. *I must—I will! I will—I*

must! left no option but *So Be It!* and, as, yet the devil had done his best to please.

Satan is extremely obliging towards his customers. He makes it a point to be so. He serves them most devotedly. *So Be It!* is ever on his lips. He knows the value of that small word YES. "*I must—I will! I will—I must!*" "*So Be It,* my Lord." What can be civiller? It saves a deal of trouble, too. *I will! You May!* The thing is so easy. Put it down—it's only another item to the score. "Time?" "Pray don't mention it, my Lord." "Time?" "Pardon—your Lordship's time is mine. Not a word, I beg. Is there any other article I can have the honor, &c., &c."

What the length of his Lordship's score might be with his devoted servant, ever at command, it is not our business to inquire. That is a matter entirely between themselves. Where his Lordship could get long credit, he usually took it if the article were to his liking. So, we fancy, it must have been rather a heavy account his Lordship had at that shop. But, then, look at the articles! What perfection! what exquisite taste!—what endless choice!—what profusion!—and what attention!—what civility!—what anticipation!—what forethought!—what resistless novelties! "*I will!*"—"*You Shall!*" "*I must!*"—"*So Be It!* my Lord." "Good devil, come to my arms! Who but you would serve his Lordship so?"

"She shall be mine, by Heaven!" said Lord Fitz-

herbert to himself, as he laid his head, the first night, on his pillow under the Vicar's roof. "*So Be It!*" hoarsely answered Satan, as the rather unpalatable *by Heaven!* grated somewhat paradoxically on his ear.

Why, when Satan's servants swear and blaspheme, do they call on God to help them? Why not on the master they serve? He can and will help them to what they want. Yet, they say, not by any chance, so help me, *Satan!* but always, "so help me, *God!*" It seems a strange antithesis this to their professed allegiance, and, we should think, must often make their rightful master angry.

"She shall be mine!" said Lord Cecil to himself. But how? Somehow. Anyhow—she *shall* be! There were difficulties in the case, very great ones! But what were difficulties to Cecil Fitzherbert, where the prize seemed worth the struggle, but to spur to double effort, whet the appetite, and give to victory its crowning zest? If Annie's heart had been without an object—his own for the asking—surpassingly beautiful as she was, probably Lord Cecil would have cared as little for its possession, beyond attainment, as he had done for twenty others had been his on similar easy terms. It was because it was not to be had for the asking, no, not if on his bended knees he could have laid at its feet all the Lordships of the earth, that he coveted it; because his pride of con-

quest was piqued, rather than his happiness was at stake, that he swore to make her his. Feel a different passion for Annie to what he had ever felt for any other woman he certainly did, a far purer, less selfish, less sensual; but whether—would she have been Lady Fitzherbert for the asking—it would have been of the quality and quantity to have made her so, without a Clermont at hand to have given the needful spur, is a matter we are very doubtful about indeed; unless, the Clermont removed, she still had remained proof against his fascinations; and, then, he would have sold his soul to hell to humble her. "*His she should be!*" that he had sworn *by Heaven!* and, spite of the special note, and, though he trembled, Satan said *Be It So!* and meant it too, as far as in him lay.

When wilful men say *I will—I must! I must—I will!*—and the dark ministering spirit answers *Be It So!* it is as if they put their sign manual to the deed without knowing its provisions. And there is where Satan has them. In for it, there is no receding; or, the only loop-hole for escape, if any, involves such sacrifices—ruin one way seems as fatal as the other.

How would many a black scamp of an attorney get on prancingly as he does, if the deed could be evaded, when conscience pricked or the conditions inconvenienced? There *he*, too, has his clients; yield

they *must*, or pay the penalty. Once in for it, far enough, deep enough,—sign they *must !*—provisions, clauses—schedules all. There is no option. Before is ruin—what is there behind? Sign—sign—sign—they *must !*—they *must !* "It's all the same. A little sooner, or a little later—pshaw! what matters it?"

And here Satan has somewhat the disadvantage. Conscience plays him scurvy tricks occasionally. There his *confrère* has the *pas* of him. He is obliged to be for ever on the watch. But, then, though the trouble must be very great, his skill and cunning beat the other's holow. Your low lawyer is but half a devil, hardly fit to hold a rushlight to his Master.

It must be exceedingly annoying, when the Doctor *can't*, because the patient *won't*. Such things will happen sometimes with the skilfullest practitioners, when blundering negligence or stubborn faithlessness defeat the cleverest ends. Not that Doctor Diable is ever at a loss. His resources are unfailing! But it *is* annoying, and very, when, all he can say and do, the blockheads *will* prefer their own pig-headed ways to his. Was it *his* fault, that Jem Shipton missed his aim? Was it *his* fault, that Clermont Onslow, through a thousand dangers, bore a charmed life? Was it *his* fault, that, at the mercy of his enemy, he had escaped the stiletto, the pistol, or the poison? Was it *his* fault, that he had lived thus triumphantly

to carry off the prize, and was going to cast it into Annie's smiling lap? Was it *his* fault, that what *was*, need *not* have been—that the will alone was brave, the heart a craven? Fie! fie! my Lord, shame on thy coward soul! "Up, up, Cecil Fitzherbert! Wherefore slumberest thou, and work to do worth all the mines of Mexico? Ho! Claude, Claude, there—where art thou honest Claude? Up, up, faithful slave! and help thy sluggish master. Up, up! and earn, good hound, thy platter full, if thou wouldst prosper. *Ne tentes*, recollect, *aut perfice!* Courage, courage. Strike home—strike home,—or we have lost our labour, honest Claude!"

There are strange anomalies, curious contradictions and inconsistencies in the best human hearts. Pining for *home sweet home!* as was Clermont Onslow's, it would yet linger—and linger—yet a little longer after the shadow that alone robbed it of the substance. And, yet, he knew it was the shadow. The sense of ridicule is very keen in some natures, mastering many better feelings. Aunt Gerty's teasings and Huntworth's home thrusts had more terror, seemingly, in them for poor Clermont, than Annie's sweetest smiles had charms. Could he but find the nugget! and 'have you sold your cradle,' would be delicious music in his ears! Then, he could face the Vicar, brave as brass, not care a snap of the fingers for Aunt Gerty, and, like a man, take old Huntworth by the fist!

Cousin Cecil grew impatient. Cousin Cecil knew the heart he had to deal with, and took his cue accordingly. Cousin Cecil's grand *coup* had yet to be played as soon as fortune favoured. Claude, too, honest lad! was to be dealt with but in one way, and that one way had not as yet turned up. Wherefore, cousin Cecil grew impatient, and talked of *home sweet home!* and pared his nails, and sighed, and got disconsolate about his hands. Had he said, courage, courage—let us dig on—dig on—and never shew our faces more at Marksbury, till we can ride in, in state, in our gilt coach and six, as fine as the Lord Mayor, —well he knew that his sweet cousin, taking fright, would have 'sold the cradle' out and out that day, packed up, and off, as sure as fate, and, quick as wind and waves could carry him, been by Annie's side again, *in statu quo*, by harvest home; and Claude, the indolent, indifferent varlet there, done no more to prevent it than if he had got his pockets full, or loved him dearly. So, *home sweet home!* sung his Lordship, and to the happy tune, nothing doubting, worked Clermont all the faster.

And work at last to some purpose, as we have seen, did lucky Clermont, and richly had he earned the *home sweet home!* when, staggered, perhaps, at his own thoughts, Cecil stared at the nuggets, speechless—then at Claude; and Claude, no less at a loss for expression, stared, too, with greedy gloating eyes and dizzy brain, through which rushed a tumult of

conflicting passions not even his subtle young Lordly master could plumb the depth of.

Hard labour beyond the strength, working, often for nothing, up to the middle for hours in water holes, wet clothes, hard fare, anxious days, and sleepless nights may be defied by the willing spirit, while the fever of excitement lasts; but, come success, or defeat, the end gained, or abandoned, the excitement over, and down goes the reeling pulse; then, up again with a morbid fire that is not strength; then, again down, now cold—now burning hot—now bathed in melting languor—now again cramped with icy shivers; till the beating spirit sinks from sheer exhaustion; while, riding rampart, the foe tugs and tears and tortures at his pleasure, unless by a desperate effort he is haply shaken off, and out crawls the poor tottering sufferer from the fray, with just the shadow of endurable existence left, to life again.

Clermont Onslow's, though a healthy, was not an iron frame. Esther Lawton had never had him but twice—after the measles and scarlatina—on her list; and, then, do what she would, she couldn't keep him covered up—he wouldn't be controlled; and, so voracious was his appetite, the quinine and port wine jelly hadn't half a chance.

Flesh and blood are but flesh and blood. It is the last hair breaks the camel's back. Nothing can be easier than for gentlemen, who wash with almond

tablets, to talk and bluster about "navvies'" work. All we say is, let them try it—try it steadily for one whole day. We ask no more. That would give them some faint idea, what sort of sinecure was fifteen shillings a-week, and find your own beer, earned in bog, and wet, and sludge, or under the bronzing beams of a broiling sun.

But to work "navvy"-fashion, *con amore*, as did Clermont, from day to day, for weeks, and from morn to night, in all weathers, good, bad, and indifferent—and expect to steer clear of gentlemanly consequences—was simply absurd. The spirit is wonderfully willing, but the flesh, even of the gold-finder, may at last get weak. The end achieved, the intense excitement over—down went Clermont, and, bundling into the blankets, as it was utterly impossible to keep up any longer,—"I'm in for it," said he. "Oh, for some of Esther's sovereign posset!"—and cousin Cecil had to act the nurse.

"Oh, for some of Esther's sovereign posset!" Alas! that was a thing just then impracticable. But a substitute was not so. Necessity has made greater men than Cecil Fitzherbert perform prodigies at a pinch. Where there's the will, the way is not far distant. "Up, up, my faithful Claude—quick, quick!—see to the kettle—pile the log-fire up—out with the rum, the spices, and the honey. By George! but we'll brew a cup of comfort to-night 'll take the shine, Claude, for ever out of Esther."

Grateful odours filled the sick chamber. Oh, what a little kind, active thought, and skill will do in time of need!

"There, then, old fellow!" cheered up Cecil, appearing presently with the smoking mess. "Taste that."

"Capital!" smiled Clermont, returning the mug, after draining every drop, with a shaking hand.

"Not bad, is it? by George!" said Cecil, taking a sip from the remnants in the pot. "Now, then, for a good sleep; and you're another man, old fellow, by this time to-morrow, 'see if you're not,' as Esther says."

"Yes; and if you get the letters," sighed Clermont—"that would set me up, by Jove! in no time, better than all the doctors."

"No doubt about them, my boy—never fear. A rare batch, too, I'll bet a trifle."

"You'll be off early?" hoped Clermont, letting his head drop heavily on the pillow.

"By cock-crow, trust me;—that is, if Claude don't over-sleep himself."

"He needn't sit up, mind. Better go to bed—I shall be all right now—am getting warm all over as a toast. Just put the water within reach. Shall sleep like a top, I feel. Strongish rather, the posset, wasn't it?—precious good, though!"

"Mild as mother's-milk."

"Good news now only from home—then I don't mind a bit."

"Sure as fate! old fellow. Dinah's bright omen in the candle three nights running, Claude says."

"Heaven prosper it!" smiled Clermont, fervently returning his kinsman's good-night grasp; and muttering, as he dozed off, something about "the nuggets—and harvest-home—and mother—and Esther—and Annie—and the letters;—" in a few minutes he had sunk into a deep, unbroken sleep.

In consequence of Clermont's illness, which might confine him in-doors for some days, it had been resolved to defer the sale of the nuggets till he was up again; their present quarters, well watched, affording, they thought, security sufficient; especially as Claude had contrived to get it about, that the prize had been sent off to Bathurst, a precaution very necessary, as the Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins, unlike those of their more wary neighbours who had anything to lose, were great talkers, and talking about gold in possession on the Turon, as elsewhere, was not by any means the safest way very long to keep it so. Care, therefore, had been taken to stow it safe away, till, all in good time, it could fetch its value at the hammer, and Clermont put the pleasing proceeds in his pocket.

A good hour before daybreak, Claude was up and about, unusually brisk and busy, for him; and, before

another hour, Lord Fitzherbert, tolerably well mounted, and having fortified himself against the raw morning air with a spiced cup, was on his way to Bathurst.

It lay across as varied and bold-featured a country as early horseman, having eye and heart for the sublime and beautiful, could have wished for, to fill his soul with thoughts pictorial, and, moreover, when he had earned it by a good four hours' ride, to give him a hearty relish for his breakfast. Yet, though at another time such nature's charms as then, with a glorious sunrise, were on every side unfolded to his gaze would not have appealed to artistic eye and heart like Cecil Fitzherbert's in vain,—on he rode through a succession of the picturesque—the genial sweetly blended with the grand—would have thrown Walter Pemberton into ecstacies at every turn—nothing seeing, seemingly, nothing hearing, nothing heeding but his own dark thoughts, and they were of the gloomiest, apparently;—on he went by flood, and field, and forest, over wild steeps, and verdant flats, well-wooded hills, and grassy, dappled dales, with downcast eyes and settled care upon his brow;—on he went—the shadow of the dark spirit before, behind, around him on every side, dogging his every step, through a paradise dragging him bound a prisoner by hell's chains;—on—on he went, and, as he went, darker, and darker grew the way; till,

though without a cloud, burst out the great, glorious parent of light, and life, and joy, and happiness ineffable, with such beaming goodness in his every smile, that not the heart of the meanest thing that crawled, or winged the air, but had a carol to his praises—black as night, at blackest, was Cecil Fitzherbert's soul within him; and, letting the reins fall on his horse's neck, nothing could he see, or hear, or feel of the universal jubilee, but that he moved alone, apart, in friendless solitude, like one condemned, cast out, to whom no ray of light, or love, or fellowship, or sympathy cared to come;—and, giving himself up to the stern, hard, iron hand of the sterner, harder, iron master-will that led him on,—"*I must—I will!*" hoarsely muttered he to himself. "*So Be It!*" answered the ready voice, in waiting, in his ear. "*You Can—You Shall!*"—and again snatching up the reins, with a wild shout his Lordship dug the spurs deep into the poor mare's flanks; and faster, and faster, over hill and dale, tore mare and master along like mad things on their way.

Whither flew that gallant dark grey with her reckless rider on her back?—up-hill—and down dale, over rocks, and ravines, through flood, and field, and forest, tearing away there, like a thing frantic, along mountain brow, and giddy edge of precipice? and a false step, a foot's swerve, right or left, would have hurled them to destruction!

Inquiring reader,—that gallant dark grey, tearing away there like mad at that frantic, fearful pace, had the devil on her back, as well as Cecil Fitzherbert. Enough to make her frantic! He was teaching his *protégé* to ride hell-pace—taking a morning gallop before breakfast, just to keep his wind in, for the great stakes to come off one of these days, Satan willing, all in good time. And come in winner would his Lordship, sure as fate! with such a tip-top trainer at his elbow. Diavolo! how they flew! faster, and faster—on—on—on. 'Ah—look—look—death yawns beneath their feet.—Ah—they make for the Wolf's Gully. Madness—mercy—they are lost—crushed into atoms! No—save us ye powers! over they go—yes — over—safe over that frightful chasm!—and on—on again—faster, and faster—oh, what a devil's dust!

Whither now flew his Lordship? tearing, striving, straining, panting, foaming on, at that hell's pace?

Whither? From himself, could he, unhappy slave—from the fell spirit that goaded him on—on on—to—

To what, or where?

To Bathurst, gentle reader, for the present—to breakfast—to take wind—breathe again—leave the coast clear awhile—and do a host of other little preliminary things—*must*—*must* be done!—to win the *Grand Victoire*—the Devil's Cup! if so it please you, gentle reader.

And after that—whither?

Where, on our poor, patient, plodding, jog-trot roadster, we neither can, nor care to follow him, good reader; but where, in all charity we trust, there may be mercy for his Lordship, as well as ourselves, at our respective journey's end, or woe betide us!

The scene presented at the Bathurst Inn, as Lord Fitzherbert exchanged courtesies with Mrs. Black, and threw the bridle to the Ostler, was of a kind that at any other time he would have called insufferably vulgar, and gone out of his way any distance to avoid. Now, anything that offered a chance for changing the current of his thoughts and drowning care seemed acceptable; and, making his way into the public room, just then exhibiting as rich a motley group as Hogarth-eye could wish for, and ordering breakfast, for which, though he had been riding hard since sunrise, his Lordship had small appetite, he threw himself into a chair, and removing his slouched hat from his brows, and wiping off the heat drops with a *mille-fleured* cambric pocket handkerchief, stared vacantly around him; when recognizing two familiar faces, earnestly regarding him under their broad brims, in the corner opposite, he smilingly arose, and, approaching the table at which Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins sat waiting for their burnt ale and poached eggs, with a friendliness that brought the tears almost into those gentlemen's eyes, as the

pressure of that delicate, aristocratic white hand sent a thrill all through them they had never felt before, dropped into a seat beside them, and in less than two minutes Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins were, to all appearances, every bit as much at home with a real live Lord, as if they had lived in May Fair or Belgravia all their days.

But, then, his Lordship had such a way of putting his inferiors, when he chose it, at their ease. It was beautiful! Yes, and sneer as they may at Lords and Ladies, we should like to know with how many additional pleasurable emotions beat the hearts of the Jones', Smiths and Co. of this life, when in the delicate hands of such great folks! who have a mind to make them somebody?—the mongrels.

Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins were evidently highly gratified; and—their hearts full—"hoped to C—the nuggets—"

Lord Fitzherbert put a finger to his lips.

Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins took—gave a glance round—and a wink,—and, blowing their noses, recovered themselves immediately.

"Confounded nuisances those public rooms! where it was barely safe sometimes to think, much less to talk. Would Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins do Lord Fitzherbert the favour to share his breakfast, just ordered privately up stairs, where they could chat at their ease, and drink a social sip together to merrier times?"

Let it not startle the elegant reader, that a real live Lord would share his breakfast with two labourers. How it might have been in May Fair is another matter; though, as to that, even in May Fair, we daresay such things have been known to happen as my Lord, and my Lady, too, hob-and-nobbing with Jem Stokes and Maester Giles, when it paid, or tickled with the whim to do it. On the Turon were not all alike labourers? the only recognized distinction being in favour of him who could boast, not his descent from the Conquest, but from that sturdy race of bone and muscle, with the will and way to use them, of more weight among *Our Antipodes*, than all the noble blood in Lodge's peerage. That was your sort at the diggings! "Lords and Ladies? Pshaw!—pretty ornaments, no doubt, when play time came, and leisure to attend to them. Ruby and diamond rings? splendid at evening parties with wax candles—how they sparkled!—it quite dazzled the eyes to look at them!—but, lor! when it came to work—a pair of hands you could use—only see what they'd fetch in the market!"

Merrily went the breakfast up stairs. It was a substantial meal, without stint, and ample justice did Blinks and Dawkins to it. Dish followed dish; and bottle bottle—fish, flesh, and fowl succeeded one another—strong ale gave place to wine, and wine to brandy,—and jollily rolled the morning hours away!

Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins had been sadly

misinformed. "A Lord not a brick? D—— their eyes then!—what was?"

Gloriously went the bumpers round. Blinks and Dawkins had been grossly misinformed! If ever there was a brick of a Lord, Lord Fitzherbert was the man. That is the best of high blood—it can do the thing so nobly when it pleases! You don't feel to lie under the smallest obligation, not a bit of it. On the contrary, you are the obliger, not obliged. It must have been very gratifying to Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins, to feel that they were, so far from being any bar to, absolutely indispensable to his Lordship's happiness that day; and their boisterous joy was, very naturally, in proportion. There is the great art unattainable by the vulgar. Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins felt themselves indispensable to Lord Fitzherbert's happiness, not his Lordship to theirs; and, so, were at their ease, and laughed, and larked and rattled, and rollicked on at such a rate was quite delightful to behold!

Nor less jovially overflowing was his Lordship's heart that jolly morning. Mercy on us!—that the proud, exclusive, epicurean Cecil Fitzherbert? that the noble heir to the broad lands of Castlemore? that his mother's heart's pride, and joy—her first, her last, her precious, only treasure? Yes, by Heaven—'twas he! Who, that had once seen, would not have known him in a moment, amidst all his

mirth, by that cold, sardonic curl upon his lip, that haughty smile, that deep, searching glance, those delicate white hands and filbert fingers, with the massive crest seal on the little one? as, grasping that stiff glass of grog with Bacchanalian glee, nothing would do, "by George! but that Mr. Blinks should favour them with a song."

Mr. Blinks coughed modestly. But it would have been *mauvaise honte* in the extreme of Mr. Blinks, had he longer demurred, especially as his intimate friend, who had known him from boyhood, Mr. Dawkins—with execrations quite superfluous, we think, with men of their word, on his eyes and limbs—swore, "so help him C——," (Mr. Dawkins speaks, please to remember, gentle reader, for himself, not we for him)—that "a prettier voice than Bill Blinks' wasn't nowhere;" and of which his Lordship being perfectly convinced, the point was settled at once;—and Blinks' song made the old roof ring again.

Faster and faster the bumper toasts went round.

And now Mr. Dawkins must also try his hand. And Dawkins did;—and poor Bill Blinks was thrown quite into the shade!

The feeling reader may fancy the pain it gives us, that we cannot here make the Blinks and Dawkins catches immortal as they merit. Might we feel at liberty, which we do not, to prune and trim them a bit—all London, who knows? might be ringing with

them this day three months—the Seven Dials nearly mad with joy! But it may not be. We are not at liberty to cut and curtail the Blinks and Dawkins, to suit our own prudish fits and fancies. It may not be; though, in the exuberance of his delight, his Lordship loudly demanded an *encore;* and, so unusual with him, and what more need be said of it? laughed, after it was given, till the tears rolled down his cheeks,—as Dawkins, adding a comic supplementary verse, started to his feet, and, in true Circus style, suiting the action to the word, nearly convulsed his Lordship with his humour.

But wine and wassail must have some limits, or the tongue is sadly apt to out-trip the understanding. Of all men in the world one would have thought—especially in present company, and on such a subject, which down-stairs he would have hardly dared to have whispered to himself—Lord Fitzherbert would have been the last to lose sight of that salutary maxim most wise men have an eye to over their cups—*quod est in corde sobrii est in ore ebrii.* It only shows how the discreetest of us may trip in a moment, put temptation but in the way. And, now, his Lordship would sing a song himself—and another—and another. Yes, by George! and spout—and speechify—and chaff—and take off to the life! till Blinks and Dawkins nearly split with roaring,

and thumped, and stamped so, that Mrs. Black, down-stairs, "did really think, one time almost, the ceiling would come in." And, now, louder and louder, and thicker and thicker roared and roistered his Lordship; ever and anon pulling them by the arm, and whispering in their ears little private revelations, that made those gentlemen stare again;—till, seizing a hand of each, "he wanted, then, to know—and he didn't mind asking *them*—as gentlemen—he wanted to know—would *they*, then—tell their mother, over there at the camps—where *they* kept their gold? Now, answer him that."

Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins "should think not."

"Claude might be a devilish honest fellow. He, his Lordship, didn't say he wasn't—mind that."

"Nor Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins neither, not they."

"Hang him, then! if he, his Lordship, would tell his own mother—see if he would—where he kept his nuggets on the Turon; and that was the long and short of it, by Jove!"

"But if—as how," observed Mr. Blinks,—"they —them nuggets—was all slick and clean, as Claude said, at Bathurst?"—and, exchanging glances with Mr. Dawkins, Mr. Blinks met his Lordship's piercing eye with a curious gaze.—

"*If—if!*" repeated his Lordship, with a wink,

and a jerk of his right thumb over his left shoulder, "*if*—if be hanged!—

> "Who'd care for the devil himself a whiff—
> No such in the world as a *but* or an *if*?"

Gentlemen!—All I've to say is this—and I don't mind saying it to you—'twixt friends—in confidence, —all I've to say is—" and his Lordship sunk his voice to a whisper—"all I've to say is—here's wishing them—with all my heart—safe and sound *there*;" and, throwing himself on the horse-hair sofa at his side, his Lordship gave evident indications that he had said enough for the nonce—had drank as much as was good for him—would have a doze—and, then, be happy to pay the score."

It might have been some two hours after Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins had taken their leave of Mrs. Black, when Lord Fitzherbert, rising from his doze which, seemingly, had refreshed him considerably, walked to the window, stern and steady as a judge, looked out for a minute or two thoughtfully over the bare, cheerless flat that formed the naked, herbless, esplanade to the inn front; and, taking his hat, made his way leisurely to the post.

There was nothing there then for him. But the English mail was expected in that evening; and there was no help for it, therefore, but to wait patiently till next day.

Where there was no alternative, Lord Fitzherbert usually bent to circumstances with easy grace; and, furthermore, happening to have other reasons on this occasion for making the best of what could not be avoided, he wisely laid himself out for such pleasant pastime as Bathurst might afford him; and, what with one thing or another, found the day hang anything but heavy on his hands. Messrs Blinks and Dawkins had disappeared, by which his Lordship judged they had completed their little commissions, and returned to quarters; and, smiling as the thought crossed him,—"not a bad idea that," said he to himself—"come what may, they'll say I was drunk! Diavolo!—not at all bad that. Set a thief, eh, to catch a thief?—good again!" and, coming in sight of Austen's stores—"that reminds me," recollected his Lordship—"by Jove! yes—the almond tablets, that's right—all in luck's way to-day."

But how fared poor Clermont on his sick bed all this time?

Clermont's taste had not deceived him, spite of his eager thirst for the posset, when he said it was "strongish rather, wasn't it?" It *was* strong rather; and, though it sent the blood flowing again like fire to the capillaries, and soon drove off the icy hand of the enemy from his heart—for which end possibly Cecil had added a gentle narcotic to the cup,—it gave him a frightful headache, but for which he had

slept sound and safe enough. But the racking beating of the temples kept him incessantly tossing and turning on his hot pillow, burnt up with fever; and nothing could Claude do, after the first heavy sleep from which he woke soon after Cecil left them, to lull him off again, except for short snatches, and then he was more awake a great deal than asleep, and saw and heard, and had an indistinct knowledge of all that passed around him—especially of Claude's form continually hovering watchfully about his bed, and the sound of his footfalls on the floor, sending daggers to his brain every time he moved, and the sharp ticking of the Dutch clock in the corner, and the hollow moaning of the wind through every hole and crevice, a heaviness to his heart he could not overcome. And, then, came thoughts confused of twenty things at once, each one an antidote to sleep,—"of where he was—and where his heart would be, if it could—of those last faltering words—those farewell looks—of the locket round his neck lying next his heart—their ride to Bonnington—that precious pledge better than a thousand promises—of the Vicar's blessing—the little bay-windowed study with its loaded shelves, moss-pattern carpet, and black-velvet bound crimson moreen curtains with their black ball fringe—oh, how homelike and happy they looked to his fevered, longing gaze!—then of his golden prize—of the tin box there concealed with his

treasures in it, beneath his bed—of Blinks and Dawkins, and whether they really thought the nuggets had gone to Bathurst;—and, then, of Cecil, and the letters, and what there would be for him—whether a long one from Annie—and if his mother was heart-broken at his long absence—and whether old Nep had forgotten him—and Paul and Virginia would come to him as they used to do—and when Cecil would be back—he seemed to have been gone an age—and—and—" as the first grey tint of morning peeped faintly into the sick chamber, again Clermont's eyes closed,—and, to all appearances, he was locked in a deep sleep.

But thought, busy, restless thought was still awake, doing its torturing will upon the poor, wandering brain; till, unable to bear it longer, he raised himself on his elbow, and, parched with thirst, had seized the mug of water by his side for a deep draught, when, oh, horrors!—did he see aright—or was it only a spectral vision mocking him? Crouching, as well as his terrified gaze could make out, about a yard from the bed-foot, cautiously crawled the figure of a man in a dark horseman's cloak—the head and face so muffled up in the hood, and masked, as to be completely concealed—dragging after him, as fast as the weight and fear of detection would permit, the precious tin box with all his hard-earned savings in it, towards the half open door-way.

Paralyzed for a moment, as the blood rushed to his

heart, and the cold sweat stood in large drops on his forehead, Clermont fixed his straining eyes, motionless, like one spell-bound, on the apparition, for so it appeared at first to his confused thought; till, the reeling brain recovering its functions in a measure, "Claude—Claude!" was on his tongue; but it clove to the roof of his mouth—he could not move—he could not speak—but sat dumbstruck, and transfixed, witnessing, without the power of resistance, the downfall of all his hopes. The robber had reached to within two strides of the doorway; another moment, and all was lost. O God!—O God!—and then the force and fury of a giant seemed to re-invigorate the faltering frame—what will not terror, and rage, and despair achieve at the last gasp, for a treasured object? With the spring of a lion, Clermont leaped from the bed, and, bounding forward, reckless of all but the one aim, fell full length on the box as it was disappearing from his sight, and, with the tenacity of a vice, making good his hold with one arm, with the other seized the cloak of the astounded thief, and with a desperate effort brought him to the ground. Not a word passed—there was no time for words—success or defeat depended on the issue of a struggle, and terrible that breathless struggle was! It was begun and over before any language we have at command could possibly describe it. There was a fearful tearing and tugging, as between two hungry tigers, for a

minute—a vengeful heaving to and fro as of two raging tides opposed—a moment's pause for breath —again the deadly spring—the trial of strength—the death grapple—the final blow,—and, sinking under it, off came, as he fell, the cloak in Clermont's grasp, torn from its fastenings as he dropped—then, a stunning report that rocked the camp from end to end—the flash of a bright pistol barrel thrust rapidly away —a dismal yell—a hurried dragging as of something heavy—a groan of agony—and Clermont Onslow lay weltering in his blood.

Where—where was Claude? A long half hour had the life tide been draining from his young master's heart, and there was none to help him. Oh! and was he to lie there, struck down thus cruelly by the assassin's hand, and be left to perish like a dog? Was there none to close his dying eyes—receive his parting wish—mingle a last prayer with his—pluck the thorn from death's pillow—carry home that farewell message to the loved ones? Oh, Claude, Claude! was this thy faithful, thy devoted service? How could'st thou ever account for it to the noble Cecil? unhappy Claude!

Ah, woe, woe! Blithe as a lark yonder came Claude—woe, woe!—up the green slope with the pitcher on his head, trolling a merry morning carol to the breaking day. Poor Claude! Is it not ever thus in this momentarily shifting scene of strong

lights and shadows?—nearest the fountain of our sweetest joys, how oft find we the nearer fountain of our bitterest sorrows, though we little thought it! Unhappy Claude!—poor, lone lad!—short-lived thy joyous carol. No season that for song—thy foot was, even as thou sangest the merriest, close on thy young master's yawning grave. Ah! did thy heart misgive thee—that thou pausedst awhile—puttest down thy water-pitcher—and crossedst thyself, O Claude, so devotedly, ere thou trustedst thyself within that blood-stained threshold? Yes, thou hadst need, in that lone hour, of all thy Christian firmness, wretched Claude!

There was a cry of horror, and rage, and wailing, and lamentation on the banks of the Turon. Rough and rugged men, albeit unaccustomed to the melting mood, gathered in anxious groups together, and talked under their breath, with blank and haggered looks, of dark deeds done, and darker to be dreaded—for gold!—gold!—gold!—and started at the sound of their own voices in the winds. And best neighbours shuddered, and looked askance and doubtfully at each other, and, though the thoughts were teeming full, they found no utterance, for there was no faith 'twixt man and man, no trust in the nearest or the dearest. They but closed together in mysterious circles, as they rested awhile from their labour, or, round the log fire, tried to dispell the creeping chill

within them with its cheering blaze, while exchanging furtive glances of mutual suspicion and distrust.

Villainous ore! Root of all evil! poisoning the fountain source of every honest joy; corrupting the whole social system; embittering, at its sweetest, every draught; sowing strife and disunion where love and concord alone should mingle; severing fondest heart from heart; tearing asunder the closest ties; with its cankering breath blasting the fairest blossoms in the bud; crushing the dearest hopes; perverting the sweetest truths, the noblest rites, the most sacred obligations! And for what? O, mammon-slave! for what?

How answered the heart of Cecil Fitzherbert? as, sitting, inconsolable, beside that blood-stained couch, with that almost pulseless hand in his, and watching, with a mute agony of grief could find no vent, that languid, home-lit smile, playing on those cold, quivering lips, he tried, but in vain, to trust his voice to read those tender passages from those loving letters at his side—telling of that *home sweet home!* and all its promised joys, to that still hoping heart over whose wandering vision seemed falling the eternal curtain would shut them out for ever?

And now what was that inconsolable heart to do? Oh! was there ever such a soul-wringing plight for cousinly love and anxiety to be placed in? Duty,

urgent, imperative duty calling in opposite directions with irresistible appeals; a fond mother imploring his return, as he valued her love, his instant return; her health at stake, perhaps her life; her affairs in disorder, already, he feared, by misplaced confidence irreparably involved—longer absence might be her ruin —her death!—and a kinsman's dying bed side, holding him by every tie should bind kindred heart to kindred. Oh! was there ever such a heart wringing trial? "What was he to do?"

"Go—go,—yes—go!" entreated Clermont, as well as his strength would allow him to speak; "you ought—you must—you must. Don't Brande say I'm getting well? Could I be in better hands? No fear now, no, no. You will leave Claude? Yes —go—go—I shall be happier—better then. That long, desponding phiz would kill me. And your dear mother sick, and sad, and wanting you at her side? Yes, you must!—you must!"

"Impossible! No, no—leave you, old fellow, thus?—no, no—impossible!"

"Does Brande say I am going to die? Nonsense— I am better to-day—you see I am. God is, I tell you, my help and strength. If He will, am I not safe enough! If not—what can you do? Yes, go, yes—do—do—you know—you ought—you must! Don't think I shall be long following you. And my mother—tell her not to fret about me—tell her

I'm all right now—and shall be back by harvest-home. Comfort her, won't you, all you can? Hang the nuggets—I don't care for them now a jot—the dream's over—I'm justly punished for my avarice. And the Vicar—and Esther—don't forget—and Aunt Gerty—and all of them—I've enough left yet, tell them—for the thimble and the toothpick. And Annie—" and for a moment or two his voice faltered, as Clermont placed a thick packet in his cousin's hand;—"give her that"—and, with averted head, Cecil pressed the precious token in speechless emotion to his lips,—"give her that—and tell her—tell her—you know—you know—"

"Yes—yes—he knew—he knew—Cecil knew all. Yes, and would do all—all—all—and more than all, required of him. But—could he—could he—ever bring his heart—to—to—leave him thus? Oh, no, never—he never—never would!" and as, exhausted, Clermont sunk to sleep on his sick pillow, Lord Fitzherbert drew his chair nearer the light; and, ordering Claude to trim the wick a bit, beguiled the half hour before dinner by reading and re-reading his mother's urgent letter, which ran as follows:—

"Hill Street, &c.

My dearest child, my best beloved!

They are making up a packet again, Bella says, for to-morrow's mail, and I must add a few lines,

though my two last long letters, cruel boy! remain unanswered. Oh, Cecil, my child! more than six weary weeks, and not a line from you. Is it kind, is it, like you, thus to torture the heart of your own mother? You must know the anguish I suffer. You, who used to be so affectionate, so feeling, so considerate, anticipating my every wish almost before it found utterance; and now to neglect your poor old mother in this way, and let her beg and intreat unheeded, and only for one line from you, just to assure her you are well, and sometimes cast a thought on pining hearts at home. Fie, fie, for shame! You naughty, you cruel boy! I have almost a-mind to say I'll never pardon you.

But do I blame without cause? Can it be that you are ill? God of his mercy forbid! And in that dreadful, dismal, far off land of savages and cut-throats! O my poor brain—my blood runs cold as ice whenever I think of it. For don't I know your thoughtlessness for self? Yes, too well. How often have I impressed that on you, but you would never heed me. How often used your dear father to say —and, oh Cecil, how true it was!—that 'the debt due to self is a moral obligation the non-payment of which involves other social sacrifices than the sacrifice of self.' Yes, how those dear words have come true. You have been a sad sinner, my child, in this respect. All are sinners who thus make society their creditors

by the non-payment of the debt justly due to themselves. You have dearly learnt all this to your great cost, my child. But, no matter, if experience does not come too late. *There* has been your great error, your stumbling-block—self-neglect. And that is why, spite of my confidence in your high honour and integrity, so like your dear father's—my heart—always, God knows, on the watch for your welfare and happiness—sometimes misgives me. I don't mean to censure, that you know very well; far less to read you a lecture at this distance, which, like the good seed, would fall, I fear, in that barbarous barren land—from which may Heaven in its mercy speedily restore you safe and sound—in but stony, sterile places. That I reserve till I can once more—oh what joy to think of it only!—pin you to my knee, and, then, a rare budget I have in store for you, I can tell you.

Oh, my child, my own dearest child! when shall I see, when shall I have you by my side again? If ever I do, will you ever escape me more? You little conceive the cares that prey on a fond, anxious mother's heart. Could I but be sure only that your health is good? but those terrible fevers and dysenteries make my blood run cold twenty times a day to think of. And no one near—no one like a mother—to do anything for you if you are laid on a sick-bed. Oh, Cecil, my child, what I suffer night and day you shall never know. My poor brain cannot contend

with it much longer. I am no croaker, that I need not tell you; but my nerves are not, far from it, what they used to be. I have much, my child, to try and vex me—more than you imagine. Those foreign securities give me, I confess it, some concern. The bonds still remain at interest, but must be provided for shortly, Houghton Palmer says. That I have engaged to do, and shall do, and then my heart will be the lighter. You know how largely I hold in 'The Gold Vein.' Heaven send they may turn out well. Vaughan is very sanguine about them; but you know who his oracle always is? Altogether, my poor mind is on a perpetual rack what with one thing or another. I'd give the world, if I had it, for a little peace. The sight of you would set me up all right again. Then, I shouldn't mind—then, I could bear anything. You know your mother's Christain firmness, my child—instilled into her mind and heart, under a good and pious parent's eye, from her very cradle, and what blessing on earth so great?—your mother's firmness, to bear with fortitude, and patience, and resignation whatever it may please the Great Giver of all things to bring upon her?

And, now, let me indulge the mother's hope brings just now most comfort with it. Can it be—God grant it!—that you are at this moment on your way home—to that best of homes, ever waiting with arms extended to receive you? perhaps, before another day,

to be pressed to this aching heart again, to part no more—to take us by surprise—your dear father's own fond way which—how well do I remember—has many a time made my bosom leap for joy? Ah, that would make amends, ample amends, indeed for all!

You would think me crazy—I am sure the neighbours opposite must say I'm a little gone—to see me standing stock-still, like a statue, for hours at the window there, watching the cabs and coaches rolling by, hoping, still hoping, hoping, hoping, to see your precious form leap out and into my open arms. And so wears the weary hours away; night follows day, and day night—and poor Dinah's cards and coffee cups, alas! prophecy in vain.

It cannot be that horrid *Gold* that holds you fascinated. You never cared for it, my precious child, enough for that. It cannot be—no, no—that such a dreadful life as you have been living—my heart shudders to read and think of it—such wicked people, such frightful deeds, such horrid scenes, such barbarous customs and companionship can be but abhorrent to your gentle nature? Then, what is it? Oh, my dearest child, why torture my heart thus? Return to your rightful, honoured, happy home, where alone you have a Title worth possession. Return, return to the soil that owns you, that is yours, that accredits, and alone will

prosper and protect you. Or, if that has no charm for you—and I will not believe it—remember you have a mother, a fond mother, and friends, kind, loving friends, which where else can you find but in your own happy native land?

Oh, Cecil, return, return instantly, if you love your mother. I am sick, sorely sick, and sad in mind and body—very, very sick and sad, my child! and *so altered* you would hardly know me! Come, come, and comfort your poor mother. I have need of comfort, Cecil. You know not what I suffer.

But you do know the wish next my heart. I need not tell it you, nor will you disregard it. Much depends, besides my peace and happiness, on your dutiful and affectionate and *immediate* compliance with that wish, more than I can here express, much more!

And, now, committing you, with all my soul, to the care of Him who can and will guide and protect His own; and with more love than words can tell, and a thousand fondest kisses, which you will not be such a glutton as to grudge my dear nephew Clermont, to whom all kind hopes and wishes, his full share of; and—*nuggets*, or *no nuggets*—building on clasping you to my heart again, while yet there is a passable remnant left of what my miniature will tell you your own mother once *was*, believe me, my dearest, best beloved—whether handsome or ugly—

Ever your own affectionate, devoted mother,

EDITH FITZHERBERT.

P.S.—Vaughan just run in, to say *The Vein* shares are up again. Thank goodness! *A-propos* of Nugent Harvey, he is all, I assure you, we could wish; though a little more sedate and thoughtful, I fancy, than he used to be—getting quite the staid, steady man of business. He says, he's worked to death almost. Devoted to Bella, as I told you. But she is such a strange child, and must have her own way. If it lead to her happiness, all well. You know, I never did coerce her, and never will. Her own heart is her best guide and monitor. She will be a treasure to her husband. I wish I could say she looks well. But your longed-for presence again among us will restore, best of all, the roses to all our cheeks. She has told you all the news; and Walter Pemberton is to add a postscript of his own. So, once more, Heaven bless you! and have you both in His good keeping. That is my constant prayer. I am more delighted than I can express, to hear you prize my parting gift so highly. I was sure you would. What else can give *such comfort?*"

Replacing his mother's letter, as Claude appeared with the grilled cutlets, in his breast-pocket, Lord Fitzherbert sat for a minute or two buried, seemingly, in thought; when, rising, and softly approaching the sick bed over which anxiously bent the Doctor watching the slumbers of his patient;—"he

is sleeping more calmly now, I think," said he, in an under voice and tone of much anxious feeling. "You are not without hope?"

The Doctor put his fore-finger to his lip, and, bringing his ear nearer the chest, listened attentively for a minute; then, drawing Lord Fitzherbert aside, —"A change certainly for the better, so far," said he. "How long it may last there's no telling. Smart fever, I see, setting in. All depends."

"On perfect rest and quiet?"

"Just so—that's the grand point."

"And, then,—you think—with care—and time, there really is some hope?"

"Yes;—with time—long time, may be—just a hope, or, rather—just the shadow of one,—without it, none whatever!"

Lord Fitzherbert heaved a deep sigh, and, leading the Doctor to the light, placed his mother's letter in his hand. Brande ran his eye over it, while Cecil narrowly watched his countenance as he read.

"How is it possible?" he asked, sadly, as their eyes met.

"That you can be in two places at once," anticipated Brande;—"obey the calls of love and duty at home, which seem imperative, and here, too!"

"And even could I;—to leave him in *that* state—" and Cecil Fitzherbert's voice completely failed him for a moment—"impossible!"

"Certainly, if his recovery depended on your remaining, I should say so, too."

"How?—think you otherwise?"

"He says himself, don't he? 'he would be happier, and better, if you *went*.'"

"There speaks his generous, unselfish heart."

"It does, indeed! Yes, he *is* a generous, unselfish, noble-hearted fellow! But he says, 'you *ought*, you *must*'—reason speaks there as well as feeling. It might be hazardous, and would not be easy, to dispute the point just now."

"And you—*you* really think, do you—he would, in truth, be happier—better?"

"I do."

"But should he—should our hopes deceive us? could I ever forgive myself for leaving him?"

"The only chance, with God's help, he has of their not doing so, is in perfect rest and quiet of mind," replied Brande. "Will these be promoted by your stay, that's the point? And with that sad, home-sick face, as he says, always hanging over him?"

"Ah! but he shall not see it."

"Keep it from him if you can."

"You think so? Ah, well!—could I—and in your hands—" and nervously grasped Lord Fitzherbert those treasured friends in his as he spoke;—"could I think *that*—that he *would* be better—happier;—and you—*you* would promise me, not to quit

him—not to leave him till he was safe and strong on his legs again—to continue his friend—the true friend you have ever been to him—at all events, till —till—"

"Of that be sure," returned Brande, with a look and tone, from him, worth all the warmest protestations put together. "No fear about that, I promise you. Quit him?—no, no—make yourself happy about that;—not till, either my art fail—and I shan't give in easily, I can tell you,—or I send him home to you—maybe come with him, too, myself safe and sound as poor human skill can make him; —on one condition—"

"Ah!—what?"

"That there are no leave-takings—no more talkings, and takings-on—about *home sweet home!* and heart-heavings—and heart-achings—you understand."

"Yes, yes. And not only send him home, safe and sound," returned Cecil, as well as he could speak for the emotion that almost choked him; "but will promise, positively promise, to come *with* him — and — and find a *home sweet home!* for yourself, too—his home—my home—all our home —a one, united, happy home—as one, united love, and joy, and gratitude can make it,—that promise—and—"

"You will promise, too," said Brande. "Very

well, I think I may—I will—I do—that is, of course if all go well, and we can find it in our hearts—which, I shrewdly suspect, we shall be able to do without much struggle—to say good-bye. And I've another thought, too, in my head — as soon as you're gone—to strike my tent up there—it's a sweet crib! — and come over here. There's lots of room. We shall be company for each other. And, then, I can have him—he's a ticklish sort of chap—always sharp under eye and hand—he can't escape me."

"So you can. Excellent! By Jove! now you've removed, I can't tell you, a load hung like lead at my heart," exclaimed Cecil. "Now I've no fear. He'll be delighted!"

"And Claude?" asked Brande.

"Remains—of course. Has set his heart on it."

"You have confidence in him?"

"The greatest."

"And your cousin?"

"Seems so happy at the thought."

"Otherwise—if you had *wished* to take him—my man, who does very well for me—a steady, trustworthy fellow—I'm sure would—"

"Have been just the thing. But Claude's so accustomed to his ways—I thought—what think you?—he would like him, perhaps, better than a stranger."

"Well—if that's so, perhaps he *had* better stay," conceded Brande, hesitatingly. "Strange! no traces of the tin box yet?"

"None. Nor any chance, I fear, of it ever in this hell hole!"

"Not much I'm afraid. Though, they say, murder *will* out some day. But, now, for the recovery of most consequence of all," said Brande, taking up his hat. "And, as a necessary step towards it, let's lose no more time. I'll go and get the night draught ready. And, to make doubly sure—you know what the old nurses say?—'nothing like the physic administered by the doctor's own hand;'—I'll drop in again presently, and give it him myself. We'll let him have all the benefit we can of it, eh?—that is but wisdom."

And, now, wherefore, still irresolute, lingered Cecil Fitzherbert? why still tarried he day after day, as if spell-bound, about his kinsman's sick bed, and held those long earnest conversations with Claude, till the night-lamp flickered in its socket? as if Claude required all those repeated monitions and warnings, and exhortations to remind him of his duty? Was it that his soul misgave him, or that he could not, when it came to the last, find it in his heart to tear himself away? Yet, he knew, he felt satisfied, he *ought*—he *must!*—oh, cruel fate!—he *must*—he *must!* And Clermont grew impatient—and faster and faster beat

his pulse—and graver and graver got the doctor. "'Twas mere folly this—'twas cruelty—'twas madness! He *ought!*—he *must!* There was but that one chance. Oh, cruel, cruel fate! Must he—must he? Yet—one look more—one more—one farewell look—one other grasp—one parting kiss—one last—last lingering gaze;—and, sobbing, "*never, never!*" Cecil Fitzherbert was dragged away.

CHAPTER XI.

BREAKING BANKS AND BROKEN HEARTS.

SUDDEN unexpected shocks and surprises "terribly try the poor nerves," as Lady Fitzherbert would say. Great and unlooked for changes, whether from better to worse, or worse to better, do not harmonize well at all either with man's moral or physical conformation. Yet, the pains he takes to try his 'poor nerves' by every conceivable torture in his power is something would be fabulous, were it not a stubborn fact staring us in the face at every turn. And what makes the matter worse, is, in nineteen cases out of twenty he could avoid it if he would. He knows where the shoe pinches, and there he contrives to centre all the pressure; and then, when too late, when the mischief is done, he winces, and bewails, and wonders he goes lame and limping, and must take to crutches and list slippers for the remainder of his days.

Sudden life, and sudden death, the sudden storm,

and sudden calm, sudden heat, and sudden cold, sudden joy, and sudden sorrow, poor humanity, born as it is to hourly vicissitudes, knows are inheritances belonging to its title, and takes them, when they come, as such, the good with the bad, and the bad with the good, with the best grace it may in the main, if it be wise. But there are some shocks, which occasionally befall, come so unexpectedly, so unprepared for, so contrary to all legitimate laws, so opposed to all fair faith and trust, so treacherously, so ruthlessly, so cruelly, with such crushing force, so utterly overwhelming, that the stoutest hearts stand aghast, staggered, stunned, as well they may be, at what they call the wickedness of this world. And they call it right. A wicked world it is, in truth! or we should not hear as often as we do of murders, robberies, arsons, treasons, sacrileges, priest-crafts, and perjuries, prostitutions, pocket-pickings, breaking banks and broken hearts by thousands.

But, oh! how much better it might be, by a little more individual diligence and forethought; if each would only lend a helping hand to its gentle reformation, wisely use the eyes and ears that God has given them, and, seeing, and hearing, and understanding that which, if read a-right, is as plain and palpable as the writing on the wall, act up to it, and save themselves a world of misery! But no, that would involve considerable trouble, and certain

social inconveniences by no means pleasant. Things must go on as they are—there is no helping it. Examples give a bit of a shake now and then, that's true, and unsettle, and disturb, and disgust one horridly! but the startled scale soon recovers its equilibrium. "Confound the writing on the wall! One may be looking at nothing else, in this wicked world, with an eye that way. Man was born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. There is no remedy for it. Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die. Breaking Banks And Broken Hearts? Poh! not the first time is it?—an old song that—old as the hills—should have taken better care. Comes of trusting to a name. Mountains disappear while little hills stand fast. You will trust no man more. Pshaw! What will you do? Ah! be your own banker—put your cash box under your pillow—and get your throat cut? Fiddle de dee! One thief's as bad as another. Be advised. Try our men. They are the soul of honor! Do such a thing? Good heavens!—they'd cut off their right hands first! When did ever the breath of suspicion sully their fair fame? Nonsense! Do you suppose the clergy, then, chary of their coin as of their characters, are not wide awake? Do you think they don't know what they're at? And the poor Half-pays; and small Annuitants; and the Widows; and the Orphans, by hundreds—do you imagine they have anything to

lose? Poh! Firm—Saints and Angels firm? Aye, as a rock, good folks all. Go, take your money boxes there—and sleep as sound as tops, my boys! Yes, and as sound as tops, and sounder, did hundreds of confiding hearts, besides Lady Fitzherbert's, sleep that stormy night of the stormier council in Eaton Square, on the faith of those sure rocks of safety and defence could never fail them!—on whose infallibility they had fondly built their all of worldly trust!—on whose already-gone-forth *fiat* hung their doom for woe, indeed! before another sun had set.

Oh, what a morrow was theirs! There are some things it is utterly impossible to fully realize the bitter misery of, however we may fancy it, till they come home to our own doors. We may think we can picture to ourselves, and understand, and feel what it must be—how dreadful!—to go to bed with abundance, and rise paupers. We hear the frightful *fiat* that consigns friends and neighbours, and for no fault of their own, to penniless poverty in a moment; we see the stunning blow dealt, the staggered look, the bewildered stare, the gasp for breath, the livid lips, the mute dismay, or the phrenzied bursts of impotent rage, and anguish, and despair,—and we shudder as we look, and sorrow, and sympathize, and mingle our tears and righteous wrath with theirs, and think we know what that bitter misery must be, as if it were our own. But, oh! not till our own

are, indeed, the ears to which that fearful, fatal cry of woe comes like a dooming knell; not till our own are the eyes that have to stare the dread ruin, our own unsought, unmerited, ruthless ruin in the face; —not till our own is the home made dark and desolate—ours, the once happy hearth, despoiled and scattered—ours the fond hopes in an instant crushed for ever—the trust abused—the *sure* rock on which we built our worldly all of pride and joy crumbling under us unto dust—can we ever realize the full misery of that dread word RUIN. Guilt has its degrees, and mercy should ever temper justice the most just. But what particular category of iniquity that guilt belongs to—with any hope of mercy—which, on the strength of its immaculateness, entices the unwary and confiding to its embraces, and, holding out the right hand of friendship and protection, stealthily and systematically plunders them wholesale with the left, passes simple folks' comprehension to define. Doubtless it will have its just due. If there is any truth in Dante, there is no fear of its being suitably provided for, as best befits its quality. How or where exactly, don't matter at this moment; but, as far as memory serves us, somewhere, isn't it? alongside of a queer lot of bad fellows below in malefactors' garb—not the most enviable companions, one would imagine, on the long journey for which they are booked to time's end, unhappy ones!

Poor Lady Fitzherbert!—for with her and those nearest and dearest to her our story has just now alone to do—poor Lady Fitzherbert! And but the day before that which dawned on, comparatively, her ruin, in the plenitude of her unbounded faith on masked villany—but, oh, such a mask!—she would willingly have entrusted her last guinea to the Immaculates were beggaring her.

Fearful power for hands human to hold, how immaculate soever, the power to blast by a breath the peace and happiness of trusting thousands, whose only sin, on that score, is in trusting them too well. And a sin, a social sin of no small magnitude it is, that blind, boundless trust, that fond figment—faith supreme! which with its own Gold, poor senseless suicide! paves the way voluntarily, industriously for its own ruin;—never seeing, never hearing, never heeding, never believing! till it finds, some day, it hasn't a shilling left even to keep it in repair. And, then, it stamps, and storms, and raves, and tears in blank despair, cursing its own folly. And there we quite agree with it.—It is a fool—a precious fool—a most consummate fool! and that is all the pity we have for it.

Three months about had done its best, after the usual fashion, somewhat to soften the shock of Saints and Angels' cruel failure; and blighted homes and broken hearts were left to the solace Christian resig-

nation had in store for them. Of all else they had been deprived. That was not an available security, in Saints and Angels' market sense, or probably had shared the fate of all the rest. And no mean solace, Christian resignation, either. It is hard for grey hairs to have to begin the world over again; hard, very hard, to be plundered in a moment of the savings of a life; cruelly hard for the widows and the fatherless to see their little treasured portions, their all, wrested from them, to be turned out stripped and naked into a cold, pitiless world, to buffet with its tempests and its scorn. But the hardest lot of all is as nothing, absolutely nothing, to theirs—with the Christian spirit to look it, *when it comes*, boldly in the face—is as nothing to theirs, who, having had all, yet never had enough—whose only gratitude was in more—more—more—who, knowing no real want, have all their lives been strangers to content. And how mercifully is the wind tempered to the shorn lamb, how the fragile reed escapes the storm, while the sturdy oak in all its glory is shivered into atoms by its side! Oh, there are ways and means in abundance yet in store for the blighted and the broken at the worst, will they only seek them faithfully, and earnestly, and patiently, where they may be found; securities available to any amount, where the hand of the spoiler shall never come, where neither moth nor dust do corrupt, nor robbers break through and steal!"

It had been a cold, drizzly, comfortless day at Castlemore, though but the latter end of August, with a raw wind blowing from the north-east; and, as the evening drew in, a bright fire blazed away cheerily in the library, throwing its pleasant ruddy glow on all around, very much to Vicar Lawton's satisfaction, seemingly, as, drawing his chair nearer his favorite corner, opposite to where Esther and Lady Fitzherbert sat close together exchanging heartfelt thoughts too eloquent for expression, while Bella and Annie and Aunt Gerty with Walter Pemberton, to give point and purpose to their musings, lingered in a little pensive knot apart by themselves at a window, watching out the day's last farewell, and pondering on a world of things, though there was apparently but one thought between them, known only to their own hearts,—he piled log on log, and, stretching out his legs, and fixing his gaze on the crackling billets, gave himself up to his own secret, silent world within.

Since we last saw Lady Fitzherbert—though but a few months only past—oh, what a change! As the light from the wood blaze fluttered on her cheek, how pale, how sunk, how woe-begone she was, how wan and wasted! Sorrow, deep, settled sorrow must have been at work there, at that heart's core, or whither had flown all those sweet smiles, why that anxious, harassed look, wherefore, just then that involuntary tear as, returning the assuring pressure of

that sisterly grasp, she sought in Esther's ready sympathy the only comfort she could find? Yes, there was a sorrow preying at that tender heart's core, a sorrow that even all clever Esther's skill and comfortings could not wholly heal. That trouble had come heavily on her in a moment she least expected; that the sure rock on which she had trusted had sunk beneath her; that her riches had taken unto themselves wings and left her sorely stripped; that the world no longer ministered, as it once did, to her gold; that henceforth Hill Street with all its treasured memories must be but as a blissful dream of by-gone days; that loved Twickenham would never see her on its velvet, flowered banks again; that, besides such present shelter as Castlemore afforded, and, after that, the old Moorfield Manor House, she meant for Bella's portion, now her sole clear Title left, she had little more of all her boasted wealth she could honestly call her own;—all these, and more, if it pleased God, she might bear, and bear submissively with Christian fortitude. But there was one thought she could not bear, that brought with it a pang keener than all the rest,—"where was her boy—her own dear child—her first—her last—her best—her only treasure?"

It was the hope deferred made sickest that poor, pining heart. "Why came he not?—where, oh! where was he?—should she never see him more? Heaven, in its mercy, grant her but this one prayer—

restore to her her child. Then, though He took all else from her—His will be done—she would utter no complaint. Why, why came he not—where, oh, where was he—should she ever see him more?" and, clasping her hands convulsively together, the heart-sick mother's head sank on her chest—her lips moved—her heart poured itself out where she knew she would be heard. A ray of heavenly comfort seemed to answer her—faster and faster moved the imploring lips—she knew that Esther watched her—she knew—she felt she said amen to every word.—Oh, the sovereign balm of prayer!

There was a deep, dead silence through that twilight chamber, alone interrupted by the hollow whistlings and moanings of the wind, as it swept in furious gusts round the old house and down its long rambling passages and corridors, driving the sleet pelting and pattering thick against the windows.

The Vicar was still busy with his own thoughts among the embers. What he saw there, to hold him so long without the movement of a muscle in that brown study, was difficult to conceive; unless it might be, mayhap, a fanciful *fac-simile* of Linwood steeple; or the four grey spires of old Marksbury; or old Socrates' pleasing form, a loved form he often saw, and would call Esther to see, too, true as life, in the Parsonage little study grate; or traces of that pet coronet, who knows, he sometimes would absently

sit and idly trace with the ciphers on his blotting pad; or, it might be, poor Lady Fitzherbert and the mutability of all worldly things hung heavy on his thoughts; or poor Vaughan! with those white hairs, and the world to begin again; or what a villain that Nugent Harvey had been—how lucky, the Moorfield deeds escaped! and Bella Gordon, too; and what now was to be done with Castlemore? Or, what had become of Cecil and Clermont all this time? and when they would find their way home again? or, he might be thinking, how well old Peter Worthington still wore! And no less busy with their own thoughts were Aunt Gerty and Walter Pemberton, watching a little kindred bunch of soaring stars, far over the south there, struggling to ride above a huge black mass of frowning clouds, doing their angry best to keep them under; while Annie and Bella, with a fond arm round each other's waists, drew closer, as the twilight deepened, to each other, and held sweet commune together, thus heart-locked, in a language full of meanings to themselves; Esther's whole thoughts centreing on that poor pining heart beside her, for whose sorrows her bosom bled, be sure, far more than for any sorrows of her own; for, good as she was, Esther Lawton has her fair share, or where would have been her glory, and its crown?

The wood-blaze had gone down; and though, when a fragment fell, up it danced again, and gleamed

and glowed in fitful flashes along the walls, bringing out the dark old Vandyks and Peter Lillies from their shadowy back-grounds, till sometimes imagination could almost fancy they were stepping from the canvas, back they went again, as the light failed them, defying the keenest ken to penetrate to their whereabouts. Even Bella's guitar case in the corner, with the Vicar's stick and hat a-top of it, had a strange, mysterious look, or old Blucher, curled round in clover by the door, would not have been so restless, growling and grumbling under his breath, and rising, and turning and twisting round, and round again, and growling and grumbling on in that unusual manner; till—Aunt Gerty out of all patience—politely shewn the door by Walter Pemberton, he sent forth a piteous howl, and, stretching himself on the hall mat, kept up, *sotto voce*, to indemnify himself we suppose, the grumbling chorus with the wind.

Darker and darker got the room. What could the Vicar be thinking about, that he did not throw on another log, and that famous pile in the basket by his side? But no—there he still sat motionless, with folded arms, vacantly staring at that solitary, smouldering crooked monster, just going to drop, and in a few minutes there wouldn't be a live spark scarcely left. Esther looked twice towards the bell, and thought of candles. Ah! that was lucky—the crooked smouldering monster broke in two—fell spark-

ling into the hot embers—and, bursting into a flame, lit up every nook and corner of the room, that you might have seen a mouse in them.

The sudden glare startled Lady Fitzherbert. Glancing round her agitatedly—for a poor nervous soul in truth was Lady Fitzherbert—her eyes encountered the stern, mournful gaze, as it seemed to her, of the old Earl, Lord Edward Adrian, in his martial suit, regarding her with a mixed look of reproach and pity. Instinctively she clutched Esther's arm for support, as with beating heart she noted the mournful, if not angry expression of that usually placid smiling face, looking on her with a stern sadness she had never seen before. "Ah! why trembled she so—why felt she that cold shudder creeping over her? See, see—he smiled on her—yes, yes—a sweet smile—oh, how like her Cecil's—her own dear child's—played over his fine, handsome, noble features for a moment. What blissful recollections did that smile recall! Then—oh, why, again that cold, reproachful look—that frown so dark, so terrible? that the blood, as she gazed, froze almost in her veins? O, Heavens! why, why were the eyes filled with those tears—why shot they those fiery bolts of vengeance at her. Ah, merciful God! the lips moved—they called on her—they spoke her name—his—Edith—Cecil—Cecil. O, forgive her—forgive—" The right hand was raised— it grasped a naked sword—could it be?

for her—to strike her—to kill her—for her doating folly—her blind weakness—her extravagance—her fatal selfishness—to wipe out the stain on his escutcheon with her blood? O, God! it came forth from the canvas—it came—it came—mercy—mercy! help, help!—it seized her by the wrist—help, help! Edith—Cecil—Edith—Cecil! a confused noise as of rumbling wheels, hastening feet, eager voices, shouts of joy, and cries of he is come! he is come! rings, strangely blended, in her ears;—then a call of "mother!—mother!"—and, letting fall Esther's arm as that electric word thrilled through every nerve, she started, like one suddenly woke from a troubled dream, to her feet—stared transfixed, as, at some ghostly object that arrested her gaze—for a moment seemed struggling to recall the wandering brain; and, with a wild shriek that drowned old Blucher's doleful howls, Lady Fitzherbert fell senseless into the embraces of her son.

CHAPTER XI.

"THE COTTAGE"—"CONTENT IS WEALTH."

THE scene that followed Lady Fitzherbert's return to consciousness and her child may be better left to be imagined than described. Such scenes are not easy to depict. Paroxysm after paroxysm in rapid succession—joy—grief—doubt—delight—rapture—dread—smiles and tears having the ascendancy as the overwrought mind one moment knew no bounds to its happiness, to its hopelessness the next. Now, the certainty that it was, indeed, the form of her loved-lost one, and no other, bending over her—that those were his dear eyes, his own, and no illusion, smiling on her—his those sweet, dutiful, affectionate lips pressed to her cheek—his those circling arms round her neck—his that treasured voice addressing her in tones so tender and touching, was too much!—her poor heart could not contain itself—it would burst with excess of bliss! Then,

oh! what if it were but a dream, but a sweet delusion mocking her, the same bright vision only that nightly for months had hovered about her bed—vanishing always, cruelly vanishing! when she thought her prayer at last was granted, and she was going to fold it to her heart? It was not enough that she saw him—heard him—felt him in her arms,—how she had done that in her dreams a hundred times? he must look at her—and she at him—again—and again—and speak to her—and she to him—once more—yet—yet—once more—repeat her name—and she his—oh, what thrilling music to her ears!—call her mother—mother—that magic word more potent than a thousand spells—"yes, yes—it was—it was—her child—her own—her only one!—she was awake—wide, wide, awake—it was no dream, no, no—no vain delusion mocking her—or Heaven have pity on her poor lost brain—those eyes—his father's, what others on earth half so beautiful?—those luxuriant glossy raven curls—that noble forehead—that commanding brow—that matchless mouth—those tender, touching tones—that graceful, manly figure—that air of high descent!—oh, joy, joy!—yes, yes, it was—it was her child—himself—her boy—her own—her only one!—he saw—he spoke—as who could speak so sweetly?—he called her by her name—mother—mother—dearest mother! yes, yes—she held him in her arms—great God be thanked!—but, oh!

what she had gone through—what had been her trials, what tongue can ever tell?—no matter—it was no dream now—she saw, she heard, she felt him at her side—she grasped his hand in hers—she pressed her lips to his—she snatched him to her heart—he was come—he was come back to her at last—he would never leave her more!—oh, spare her poor brain—she should go mad with joy! Now take all the rest—wealth—title—power—all—all—all!—His will be done!—she would utter no complaint."

But were there none to be considered, no loving hearts to feel joy or sorrow that night but Lady Fitzherbert's?

Poor Lucy Onslow! Joy or sorrow—it was alike one to Lucy Onslow; and inconsolable nephew Cecil was spared a painful duty. Not so with Esther Lawton. Esther loved Clermont like a mother, and would never have done with her anxious enquiries and cross-questionings, but for the Vicar, who, after well weighing it, considered, under all circumstances, they had much to be thankful for; that it was a mercy it was no worse; that, left in such kind and skilful hands, their further separation would probably be but for a few months only at the most; that it seemed to him, Cecil had acted wisely in sacrificing his feelings to his duty, though the struggle must, indeed, have been a most heart-rending one! It was, clearly, his duty to act as he had done upon his mother's

letter. Her affairs, and those of Castlemore, called for immediate and decisive steps; nothing could be done effectually while he was away; and her health—perhaps her life—depended on his presence. He thought the Doctor had advised judiciously. For his own part, he quite agreed with him, that absolute rest and freedom from all anxiety were indispensable to recovery. He knew Clermont's noble, generous nature too well to suppose his pulse would beat calmly with his cousin about his bed, and what, in truth, could he have done for him? and a disconsolate mother in need of him at her side. Altogether, he repeated, that he considered he had acted wisely, and he could not but admire him for the fortitude, under the sense of filial duty, he had shewn. So far, his own mind was easy—that they should see Clermont again before very long—much sooner, he believed, than if Cecil, as his heart would have ruled it if it could, had waited till he was fit to undertake the voyage. The loss of his hard-earned treasure was vexatious, certainly; but that was the least evil they had to fret about, as long as there were the tooth-picks and the thimbles left. They were all, he was sure, they cared about, and more than he had bargained for a good deal, and so he should tell him to-morrow when he wrote to him. Once safe and sound home again, and then, nuggets, or no nuggets, they'd make the old bells ring again, he'd warrant, long and loud as though

he were the Lord Mayor himself, coming to see them, rich as Crœsus, in his gilt coach and six.

After this what could Esther say? except to heave a suppressed sigh, and hope and trust in Heaven it might be so! and from that hour never cease day and night her prayers, nor puzzling her brain what best little additional comforts she could, with Annie, smuggle into the famous great parcel of love to be sent off next week to the sick room, with all speed, to cheer up a bit the poor home-aching heart. She would not care so much—God was very good!—if she could only run in now and then and have a look, and see with her own eyes how he was going on, and if he wanted anything, which, poor child! he must, and took care of himself, which he never did; and there was the fear—he was so thoughtless always, so venturesome in illness. There was that time—she remembered it as if it were but yesterday—and so would his poor dear mother if she'd been alive—that time when, poor dear boy! he was getting over the measles;—the trouble she had with him, to make him mind, and take his physic, and keep out of the draughts, and not try his strength too much, there was no telling."

"Yes—but," reminded the Vicar, soothingly, "the doctor had faithfully promised Cecil to keep a tight hand over him."

"True, that was a great comfort! But when it

came, which it must, to the nurse, to the getting up and about again—she knew what that was—and the nice gruels, and arrow-roots, and the broths, and beef-teas, or nice tempting bit of fish, or chicken, or tender mutton-chop, and the glass of good old port, and home-brewed beer—there's where she feared! And, before that, when his poor wandering head, God help him! was tossing about with the fever, and his skin was hot as fire, and, poor creature, he could drain the pitcher full,—who was to do for him like a nurse there—shift his hot hard pillow, bathe his burning hands and temples, and give him the nice, fresh cooling drinks to moisten his poor parched lips? Could the doctor do all that? No! she knew what that was well—none better. What brought the Vicar round after that dreadful cold he caught at Betsy Gibbs' funeral? Not the doctor only, was it? Ask Dunlop himself—though he did all he could, that she would ever say. There was where she feared. But God was very good—and his mercies, who could number them? Oh! if she could only just run in and have a peep at him—she'd be bound!—"

"Yes, yes, would she could!" warmly accorded the Vicar. "But, as that might not be, they must trust in Him, with whom all things were possible, and whose dispensations were, indeed, ever merciful and good!"

And Aunt Gerty, what could Aunt Gerty say, but,

with the best grace and fortitude she could, holding Annie's cold hand in hers, breathe a heartfelt *amen! amen!* with choking voice to the Vicar's hopeful prayers, and for Annie's sake do her best to disguise the pang she felt. Or Walter Pemberton, more than anxious friendship dared with those trembling eyes and hearts interpreting every look and movement of his lips. Or Bella, what words had Bella at command to express the tumult of emotions struggling in her breast? None. Deep as was Cecil Fitzherbert, so deep and impenetrable at times that even Nugent Harvey, who thought he knew him well, was often at fault, there was not a secret of his inmost soul, scan him closely, but Bella could see through. There was a something in his look and manner when their eyes first met, and he agitatedly grasped her hand and kissed her cheek, then held her for a moment at arms-length, to feast his fraternal love with another fond gaze of love and admiration before catching her to his delighted breast again, which, contrasted with the marked difference, the distance, almost coldness, in comparison, with which he met Annie's burning blush of eager, unfeigned joy, then the deadly paleness that overspread her face as the fatal news came out,—made her blood run cold.

That was no time for dissimulations or disguises, yet, Bella felt he was acting a part; what part, or wherefore, were questions she dared not even ask

her own heart at present. She might be mistaken. In such a case she ought, perhaps, most of all to mistrust herself. His, too, she knew, was ever such a strange, incomprehensible nature, working so by contraries. It might be only fancy, a wrong-reading of hers—though she thought she had sufficiently overcome all that—or a point of conscience with him—he was so odd,—of delicacy, he might deem it—of strict duty towards his cousin. Yet, if so, it seemed to her over-done, uncalled-for, indeed; there was a study, an effort about it she did not like, inconsistent, it appeared to her, with the right feeling, a design, an end in view in it jarred painfully with her sense of candour, a deeper meaning in it, it struck her, than appeared upon the surface;—and, as the thought flashed across her, she felt a cold shudder come over her, and her knees totter beneath her weight. No, she was not mistaken—she could trust herself—those hopes were past for ever. Much as she had loved him, and felt, but for one irrevocable act, she could love him still; ready advocate as her blind affection had ever been for him, even when her conscience least upheld her, often too ready well she knew; severely as she had, since those blissful dreams, taken herself to task,—never had she ever believed she could look on him with the eyes she did then—she felt as if she could almost hate him at that moment;—and, clinging closer to the object,

then of her tenderest care and sole solicitude, what could Bella and Annie well say or do more, than, forgetting all of self, hand in hand and heart in heart, in silence mingle their souls together, and thus share a mutual support and solace in that mutual hour of trial nothing else could then give them. And Annie, if, in her keenest moments of joy, or grief, the power of words to give utterance to the heart's fulness always deserted her when she most had need of it, never had that choking heart known so acutely as then the pang of dumbness. Staggered, stupefied, she sat as in a dream, but wide awake. She saw, and heard, and understood, but too well! all that passed, and was looked, and said, and done around her; yet, through a sort of maze in which the bewildered brain was lost, but tried, yet feared, to find itself again.

With one cold hand grasped in Bella's, the other in Aunt Gerty's, sat Annie between them mute, and motionless; and, but for the heavings of the pent-up bosom, struggling against the torrent it was bursting with, was more like a marble monument of woe, than aught endowed with life and flesh and blood.

But the first shock over, and reason, with reflection, in some sort regaining the dominion, Annie could listen more calmly and composedly to the details of Clermont's danger; and, after awhile, even talk confidently of the happy moment would restore

him to her sight. But, then, how beautifully, how feelingly, how persuasively could Cecil talk when he would, how fascinatingly adapt his discourse to the tone and temper of his hearers, and therein lay no little of his power. Few could resist him where he had the mind to conquer. There was a sweet music in every cadence of his voice, a captivating melody that held the senses enchanted whether they would or not. And Annie listened, and, the more she listened, the stronger grew the spell; for he talked of Clermont—of "his virtues, and goodness, and gentleness, and generosity, his manly beauty, his truth, his noble courage, his honour and integrity, his piety, and cheerfulness;"—then, of "his thorough English heart—his ardent love of home—of dear old Marksbury—of Thorney-brakes—of 'The Cottage' across the heath—and the old Parsonage, the sweetest home of all!—and—and—of all the treasured memories that made that home so precious;" —and then, of "their wondrous travels and adventures—of the strange things they had seen and heard—their hair-breadth 'scapes by mountain, field, and flood—the storms encountered, and the perils braved;—their digger's blustering life—its pains and pleasures—ups and downs—and roughs and smooths —the dazzling hopes—the blithe sets out—the blank returns,—the hope renewed—the toil afresh—the untiring nerve—the first sweet fruits—the reckless

waste—the anxious days, and sleepless nights—the search renewed—the haggard looks—the hope afresh —the eager rush—the toil in vain—the drooping strength—the coming night—the one stroke more —the glittering mass—the cry of joy—the prize at last—the *jubilates*—the *home sweet home!* again; —the unvanquished spirit, but the unequal flesh— the fevered pulse and reeling brain—the sick, sad bed —the nugget-box—the skulking thief—the trial of strength—the villain blow—the falling clutch —the coward shot—the cry of wail and woe;"— and then, of "how grateful they ought to be—and of how soon they should see him again—and how often—though it might be for all their joy in the end—his heart had smitten him, sorely smitten him! for leaving him at all;—but of the delight unspeakable in store for them, when, once more re-united, they could tell over and over again of all those cares and crosses which to the travelled heart made home so treasured, and gave to foreign *souvenirs* their only worth."

And Annie listened;—and, smiling through her tears, how angelically beautiful she looked! And never seemed she now so happy as when Cecil was at her side, and, talking on, lulled her with that sweet siren voice to rest, and Clermont stood before her in her dreams. Even Bella was not proof against its witchery, but, only for Annie, lingered and listened,

too, and but for which, how drearily the heavy hours had dragged on!

And weeks had worn away. And now every post must bring the longed for tidings. Oh, that heart-sickening suspense, more intolerable than death itself! At last they came:—a long letter from the doctor, with a postscript of four lines scrawled in feeble characters by Clermont's own hand; and a note inclosed from Claude, by special command, to Lord Fitzherbert.

What said the doctor? More a great deal in detail than we can find space for now, though a page or two might be filled with many a worse theme. In effect—that, "after Lord Cecil's departure, as might have been expected, poor Clermont was a good deal cut up for a day or two, but rallied again surprizingly, and had such a flow of spirits it was necessary to keep him tight down for a time and scold him soundly for the wound broke out afresh, and the fever got so a-head they could hardly keep it under. But, thank goodness, there was no fear now on that score—nor much he hoped on any, unless came a relapse—and the wound was healing nicely.

They had succeeded in extracting the ball from the right side, just above the lung, and a difficult job, and painful one, it was. Poor fellow! he bore it like a hero. An important point that gained. And now, that danger removed, if the wound went

on kindly, and the cough gave way, he really had great hopes. But all still depended on perfect quiet of mind and body for a little longer. The least exertion opened the wound again, and brought on difficulty of breathing.

His own patience and cheerful submission were admirable! Except that he couldn't have Mrs. Lawton—"good Esther," as he called her—sometimes to nurse him—and then he knew he should get well in no time—he never heard him utter a complaint. He had no doubt, however, before harvest-home, of seeing them all again, as well as ever. And if, only just for a little while could be shut out entirely that precious *home sweet home!* from his longing gaze, no doubt but that his speedy chances of getting there would be materially expedited. Altogether, the prospect was so far cheering, that he was, though slowly, decidedly on the mend, and that way tending, and with this they must be satisfied for the present. Next letter, he hoped, would give them a clean bill.

By the way, they would be glad to know he had the advantage of a brother leech's long head, besides his own, now in camp up on the other side, and a daily consultation in due form; and he was only sorry they were out of the twopenny post old district, or they should have a regular bulletin twice a-day, *secundem artem*, specimens to see. At all events,

they would do their best to give an account of themselves as they should like by and bye, to the satisfaction of all friends. And to this end, he reckoned on loving hearts at home helping them all they could, by having patience, and sending out the first chance —which he need not, he was sure, remind them of —the articles in the inclosed list from the druggist and mercer's, and any other little sick room comforts, none better could be intrusted with, by all accounts, than "good Esther Lawton." Then, they should get on bravely he hoped; and if he got well before they came, and didn't want them—all the better; they would do, as God sends, for any other poor sick souls, far away from *home sweet home!*

At his earnest request, he had consented to Clermont's adding just five lines by way of postscript, and no more. He could not find it in his heart to refuse him, he pleaded so hard, and declared, "if they wouldn't let him, he should take on terribly, and have no sleep all night." Soon he might fill a foolscap sheet full if he could. And then he had as good as make up his mind—D.V.—to pack up his own traps, too, and steer, with him, for a loved nook he knew of in the safe and snug little haven afar off, northward there, his own greenest Isle of Isles; and once back there, catch him ever leaving it again.

And now for the postscript—

Postscript—To be five lines only, with a heart

brim-full and bursting, and must not talk of Home, *lest it break. It will, that's certain, if I don't. Say for me all that crowds for utterance. A quirefull would not hold it. Am getting well fast now. A right good fellow, Brande; almost as good a nurse as Esther. O what a happy* harvest home! *Fondest love and best regards to all. Kiss my dearest mother fifty times for me; and Aunt Gerty twenty; and Annie—tell her—"*

But here the pen had stopped. The five lines had been considerably exceeded; no doubt the doctor was imperative—and poor Annie was forced to content herself as best she could.

Claude's note to Lord Fitzherbert, shewn, at present, only to the Vicar and Aunt Gerty, was in a very different tone to Brande's, far less sanguine as to Clermont's recovery, extremely doubtful, indeed, and desponding on the whole. He bore willing testimony to the Doctor's unremitting care, and skill, and kind attention—nothing could be kinder; but he feared it was too much to hope he could ever possibly get over it. He was a little better one day, and then worse the next. The wound looked very angry, and the cough was sometimes dreadful. He was so thin and pale, too, it made his heart quite ache to see him. He wandered a great deal in his sleep, with the fever, and was so weak they were obliged to carry everything

to his mouth. He was like a child, could do nothing for himself. He thought it would be a miracle if he got over it! He might, please God! —and Dr. Brande sometimes seemed to hope he would; but he didn't know; he was afraid to say; there was no telling what turn the case might take; he was never two days the same, though always happy, and cheerful, and talking about being home again, for certain, by harvest time. Please Heaven he got round, he, Claude, should of course return with him to England; if not, he thought he should like to remain a little longer, and try his luck further up the river, about the Wallabi Rocks, where some of them were getting easy their sixteen ounces, and more, a day. In such plenty was the gold thereabouts, they were picking, many of them, the dust out, thick as peas, with the points of their knives. He hoped and prayed, however, that Mr. Clermont would get well again; and that, and to dear old England again—would be a thousand million times better, with only bread and cheese, than the dreadful, dismal dreary life where they were then, with all the gold on the Turon put together.

He begged Lord Fitzherbert would give his respectful duty to Lady Fitzherbert, and Miss Gordon, and his best regards and kindest remembrances to all friends in Hill Street, especially to Mr. Richards, and Mrs. Dinah Norton; and tell them he should never forget their many kindnesses to the last

moment of his life. He hoped to send them both a long letter soon, and a little Turon keepsake by a friend who was going back to England next month, he thought."

And Annie read, and re-read a hundred times that precious postscript, brim full to her of expressed, though unspoken meanings. He had coupled her name with the beings he loved most on earth! yes, and *her's* was the last word upon his lips. And he was getting well fast now—her dreams had told her so. The doctor, too, good, kind, dear Brande, said as much? And would be home again, joy, joy! by harvest time;" and running to Aunt Gerty—who could so surely tell her as Aunt Gerty, how many short weeks it would be till then?

What is the lapse of a few fleeting months between the promised prize and its attainment, surrounded by kind, encouraging, assuring hearts, giving wings to every hour? And what hours could hang insupportable, with those ever watchful smiles, those anxious endeavours ever studying to beguile them of their weariness?

And Lord Fitzherbert talked; and so talked—on such sweet, unselfish, generous themes, that Annie knew no pleasure like being by his side, and even Bella reproved her first too hasty thoughts. And Lady Fitzherbert would join them smilingly, and, edging her chair between them, pass whole hours in

loving chat; then, kissing a cheek of each, leave them her blessing in her stead, and go and ask Esther, "were there ever twain so beautiful on earth?" And Esther's beaming eyes would be her best response; while the Vicar, looking on with a calm pastoral joy, would call them his pet lambs, and agree with Aunt Gerty, "what a happy shepherd he ought to be."

And now Lady Fitzherbert must leave that dull dismal place Castlemore to Arnold Webster, the Rooks, and Bridget Crofts, and come and make the Parsonage her home till the Moorfield house was ready, or she had made up her mind where else she could, with the fairest chance of peace and happiness, live out the remainder of her days. Yes, she would go to Fernleigh. It was dear to her from old associations, very dear, and a favourite of her husband's. Could he look out from the grave, he would, she was sure, be pleased to see her there. At all events "The Cottage" was dry and healthy, and comfortably furnished, and would just suit her for the summer; and, by then, Clermont, please Heaven, would be with them all again, and they could determine what was best to be done about Castlemore. She must be her own mistress, if only of a nutshell. Her nerves required rest and quiet. She thought "The Cottage" was the very thing! as the Vicar said,—retired, but not too lonely; and, near the heath, must certainly be bracing; and there was a nice garden, and con-

servatory out of the breakfast-room, which would be a great amusement to her—she loved flowers so, and so did dear Bella; and, within a walk of each other—for they couldn't call it much more—they could be in and out, couldn't they, as neighbourly as possible."

"Yes, that they could! And everything stood, too," reminded Esther, her eyes dancing with delight, then swimming with tears, "just as poor Lucy left them—for the Vicar wouldn't have a thing touched till Clermont came back;—and poor Lucy was always so neat and nice. And Ben and Dolly—"

"Yes, and Ben and Dolly—that was true—knew all about the place so well, they'd be quite an acquisition. She couldn't bear strange faces. And Dolly was such a good cook, wasn't she?"

"As any in all Hampshire, that Esther could truly say. She didn't know a better—a better *plain* one. Soups she did exceedingly well; and fish, boiled and fried; and all sorts of poultry and game; and puddings and pastry, just as well as Hopkins; cheesecakes and custards, she thought, better;—but made dishes—"

"Perfectly unnecessary in the country," considered Lady Edith. "She knew poor Lucy never ate them. They were very well, and right and proper, at dinner-parties, for *entrées;* and, then, in England, who ever hardly touched them? She used to be very fond of

them once, but that was from living so much in Italy and Paris. Not that she disliked first-rate French cooking at all. She never suffered from dyspepsia so little as after a French dinner. Still, a good plain cook, no doubt, *was* a treasure."

"She *was*, that Esther quite agreed to. And the trouble she had had, with one or the other of them, after Mary Chalcraft died, poor thing! and before Hopkins came, was unknown. And that, poor Mary's death—for she wasn't forty-five when she died—was owing chiefly, that she did believe, to her turbot getting over-boiled one day, waiting for the Squire. At least, she took to her bed next day, and never got out of it again alive. She said it killed her herself, she put herself in such a way about; which shewed what pride they took in it, didn't it, when they loved it as much as Mary did. It often made her smile, though—talking of cooks—to think of the Vicar.—He was the plainest eater, she thought, she ever knew in her life;—he didn't mind what it was, so that it was the best of its kind, and nicely done, and served up well; an easier man to please with his meals, although a little irritable sometimes, and who wasn't? didn't live. It often made her smile to think, when—that was just after Mary died, and they were terribly thrown out—one day, not knowing what to do, they advertised. Not that she held good with that way, or ever should. Well, they got three answers, all

likely ones, thank goodness! for they'd been nearly plagued to death. Wasn't it enough to try a saint? Only fancy—two *professed* cooks, and twelve months' characters, and neither of them knew, then, any more of making a loaf of bread, or mug of beer, or glass of grape, or gooseberry, than she did of the Vicar's Greek! so, of course, they wouldn't do. Well, the last did seem just the thing—eighteen months, and over, from her place before that, and nothing she didn't know;—only, she wanted thirty guineas a-year, perquisites—which *she* always set her face against—tea and sugar found—and every other Sunday evening to herself."

"'Thirty guineas—perquisites—tea and sugar—and every other Sunday evening. Is that all? Cheap as dirt!' cried the Vicar—'and can do everything. Done! Thirty guineas — perquisites — tea and sugar — and every other Sunday evening to herself—a bargain! Of course, she can boil a potato? Needn't ask her that, I suppose?'"

"Oh, you never saw such a look as she gave him! She shouldn't forget it if she lived to a hundred. Out she bounced without another word—slammed the door in his face; and that was how they got, thank goodness! Martha Hopkins."

"They *were*, she supposed, the greatest plagues of life. Lady Fitzherbert had always heard so. For her own part, she never troubled her head about them;

but left it all to Norton. Dolly, she thought, would suit them very well; and Ben was a great florist wasn't he?"

"He had got the shew-prize for his dahlias and cucumbers three seasons running at Roxberry; and would have carried off the water-melons, as sure as fate, if it hadn't been for Humphrey."

Yes, Lady Fitzherbert felt sure she should be very comfortable at "The Cottage." There were feather-beds, she believed, to all the rooms. Poor Lucy was such a good, such a careful housekeeper! And double sashes, too, to the best bed-rooms—that was a great comfort. The butcher's boy called every morning, didn't he? And she should buy two cows—she was a bit of a farmer in her heart—and some pigs to eat the skim milk, and lots of poultry, and pigeons—she loved pigeons! It was so delightful, when you threw open your bed-room window of a morning, to hear them cooing—there was something so innocent, and peaceful, and happy in it! And Dunlop really *was* very clever, wasn't he? That was a very great comfort, too. A good Doctor within reach was such a blessing! And coals they got from Bonnington? There was plenty of wood, too, the Vicar said? She was fond of a wood fire—it threw out such a nice warmth, and bright blaze. She should make her own bread, of course—Dolly was a capital hand at that, she knew, and the dairy, too. The poor were

pretty honest about Fernleigh, Cecil said. She didn't mind how many, at all, as long as they were honest. They'd not known a case of house-breaking thereabouts for twenty years—not regular house-breaking, Norton told her. And, true, there'd be the two dogs from Castlemore—and Cecil—at least, for some months—and—and James Lambert—and Ben always, come what might. And, by the bye—that put her in mind—there were his poor dear father's two guns, and the holster pistols might as well be packed up with the rest—though she had no fear;—and Bella's harp and piano, too,—then the girls could have some nice duets. Cecil had a sweet voice if he would but practice. He used to sing exquisitely when they were at Twickenham. All nature—he never took a lesson. The chimneys, Sam said, didn't smoke in the least —that was a great thing in a country cottage. She should get down some of her glass, and Dresden china, and nick-nackery from Tilbury's, and make the drawing-room quite gay. The bed-rooms were carpeted all over—that she liked; and the views from the windows, over Thorney-Brakes, Bella was in raptures about. The rambles over the heath—she did so love the purple heather—would do her, dear girl, a world of good! Never, she thought was such a generous heart! She made every body's sorrows, she loved, her own. The poor would find a good friend there:—yes, she didn't think she could do

better than "The Cottage;" it would set them both up. Content was Wealth! And Clermont might have worse tenants a good deal."

There being no question about that; and, after a long closeting with the Vicar, as trustee, all necessary preliminaries having been satisfactorily adjusted, and approved by Cecil, a move, with as little delay as possible, was decided on unanimously for the Parsonage; the Vicar and Esther preceding by a day or two, to get things ready;—the chintz bed-room in due order for Lady Fitzherbert; the little octagon dressing-room adjoining for Norton, within call; 'the bower,' next to Annie's, for Bella; his old quarters, which he preferred to any other, for Lord Cecil; and 'the snuggery,' looking over the shrubbery and cherry orchard, for Walter Pemberton—that was, if he would only be so good as to listen to reason, and be made to understand once for all, that Aunt Gerty's nerves, indeed, had to be considered as well as others; and how was it possible she could ever get back to Marksbury with that *oudacious* Jerry, driving herself, without some terrible consequence too tragical to think of? Once landed safe and sound, he, Mr. Pemberton, was free, for any thing she cared, to be as highly ridiculous as he pleased, if he considered it becoming; only, she Aunt Gerty must be permitted to have her opinion; but that was, as Rosalie truly said, "neither here nor there." He might be off—and so she promised him

—the very next day to that delectable Gray's Inn, and his eighteen-penny make-shift at "The Club," provided always, he gave them a week's notice, that was only fair; and then—could find it in his heart—she was terribly afraid it *was* hard enough for anything —to tear himself away."

"I think," said Esther, brightening, after a long brown study, as the four grey spires of old Marksbury church came peeping from the hill top into fuller view out of the sequestered leafy little nook in which they were embowered in the hollow; "I think—I feel—I am sure, dear Lady Fitzherbert has decided wisely."

"How so?" asked the Vicar, gathering up the reins, and putting Strawberry into a gentle trot again.

"About 'The Cottage.'"

"Unquestionably."

"How delightful it will be!"

"Won't it?"

"But they mustn't think of going in for a week, or ten days, at least."

"There's no necessity."

"Not the least. It must be thoroughly aired first—good roaring fires kept up in every room. Susan Gibbs and Nanny shall go in to-morrow; though I don't think—I'm sure—it can't be damp. Dolly has slept in the beds regularly all round; but it's best to be on the safe side. Cheffins had better

run over to-morrow. There's the paper coming down a little under the window in the back east attic, over the scullery, where the pipe burst. And Ben must see and have the chimneys all swept. It's a pity, that it is—it couldn't have had a fresh coat of paint outside. Of course inside, now—that's impossible!"

"Quite."

"Well, who'd have thought it? How strangely things happen! Poor Clermont. Delighted enough, I can fancy, he'd be, if he only knew how well we've settled it."

"We have much reason to be thankful as it is."

"That's true! We have! A mercy he's as well as he is, poor lamb!"

"Indeed so!"

"And Cecil—there's a blessing, too! What poor Edith would have done? It makes me cold all over to think of it. There's a comfort!"

"Indeed so! A very great comfort to us all."

"And his ever watchful thought for—and dutiful attentions towards—and exceeding feeling for his mother—that I do love to see so!"

"He is very thoughtful for her."

"And for *all of us!* See how kind he is to Annie!"

"Exceedingly so!"

"I do think now—a kinder, more feeling, affec-

tionate heart, for a child—come to know it—don't beat. We didn't half know him, Lancelot."

"That's true."

"Not half! I go a great deal by a child's—a son's in particular—feeling for his parents."

"No bad criterion. Especially for *such* a parent!"

"That's what I mean. What a mother's heart! I do think he loves her tenderly."

"He ought."

"A better creature, I think, don't live. We've all our weaknesses. Great allowances are to be made. It's a trial, a great trial! to be left with only one."

"True, true," agreed the Vicar, gently pressing the hand laid on his knee. "On that score, *you* have not erred past forgiveness, I think."

"I trust not. Perhaps—had it been the boy," sighed Esther, with her throat full.

"Nay—nay—what difference had that made?"

"All. It's the *mother* spoils"—and Esther smiled through her tears—"not the *father*. Had it pleased Him to spare me the boy—perhaps—"

"You would have been just as fond and foolish, may be, as others, you mean; and with quite as good excuses, I make no doubt."

"He would have been the image of yourself."

"And the danger, then, all the greater," smiled the Vicar. "Best as it is, be sure. What does Lady Edith think of Annie?"

"Didn't you hear what she said of them both yesterday, when they were sitting together talking about Clermont at the window?—'Never were twain so beautiful on earth!'"

"Tut—tut—the silly goose! 'Faith! that's one way the mothers spoil them with a vengeance. And you—noodle enough, I'll bet a farthing, to go and tell them?"

"And what harm, if I had?"

"That 'no twain on earth so beautiful as they?'"

"Well, and what then? Do you think Annie, if I had, don't know better than that? There, now—beautiful as Cecil is—the most beautiful face, I do think, of its cast, I ever saw, then, in my life,—if I were a girl could have my choice of the two—Cecil Fitzherbert—or Clermont Onslow;—there now—though Clermont were poor as a church mouse—"

"Ah! there's old Nep, I declare!" cried the Vicar, suddenly pulling up within thirty yards of the Parsonage gates. "Always first to welcome us home again—faithful old friend!" and, running his eye over the porch front—"how small and funny it looks, don't it, after Castlemore?" said he.

"I'd rather have it a million times!" cried Esther.

"Whether, or no," smiled the Vicar, throwing the reins to Humphrey,—"it wouldn't be any the worse, would it, for a clean face? And, to-morrow, we'll give it one, Humphrey, please the fates."

CHAPTER XII.

"HEARTS AND HOMES."

It did please the fates, seemingly; and next day, a little after sun rise—Humphrey having taken the hint, and bestirred himself in good earnest—busy as bees were the plasterers and painters hard at work on the Parsonage and "Cottage;"—so that, by Saturday—Huntworth Lowndes himself having undertaken to run across to Castlemore, provided Rosalie would go, too, and shew him the way, and get till then, telling Cecil only why, Esther's heart chuckling at the thought of taking them all by surprise,—never was such a metamorphoses! Even the Vicar, tolerably well acquainted with every brick, one would have supposed, of the old place, stood gazing, as Master Cheffins cleared away the ladders, and pots and brushes, in a manner quite amusing to behold; as if it were the first time in his life he had cast eyes on the 'little paradise on earth,' as Esther, in the pride

of her heart, called it, and was saying in the pride of his, too, then, as he had said the first time he stood on that same spot, regarding it with loving looks, some five-and-twenty years ago—"thank Heaven such a little paradise was his!"

And well might Aunt Gerty throw up her hands in amazement, as, landed at last, they all stood in a bunch on the little lawn wonderstruck; and Lady Fitzherbert declare to Cecil, "it looked as large again, as when she saw it last;" and Walter Pemberton puzzle himself in vain to make out where the grape clustered window was he used to call his own; till reminded by Rosalie "it was on the other side of the house, that was all, and the grapes growing as fast as they could, if he would only please have patience;" and well might Annie's tender heart bound again to see her father smile so pleased; and Bella's heart bound, too, at Annie's guileless joy; and Cecil, "only wishing Clermont was there among them, feel as if he had really reached *home sweet home!* at last," and Huntworth "dash his wig, if he wasn't devilish glad he had!"—both which expressions Rosalie taking exception to, as "extremely inelegant, to say the least—for what on earth had his wig, if he wore one, which she had yet, indeed, to learn, or the devil either—an acquaintance, by the bye, he was occasionally rather more familiar with than was creditable she took leave to say—to do with his Lordship's return home?"

—well might Rosalie pout her lip, and "wish to goodness somebody else she knew would put a fresh face on it at Hazelcombe, for it wanted it bad enough. Oh, dear! how blind some people were that pretended to be so wide awake. It was no business of hers, to be sure, if things were going to rack and ruin. Well they might. She had said enough. Any one could see—couldn't they Mrs. Lawton? It didn't want a conjuror to tell them, *there* was no Missus—no right Missus yet at Hazelcombe? She had said enough. She repeated it.—Now he must take his own blind head-strong, self-willed way—only don't be coming for pity to her, indeed;—and well might Esther, looking delighted on, have quite enough to do, to listen, and think and ponder; and, blessing herself in the thought of *how good was Providence!* realize, in some sort, a faint pre-knowledge at that moment of what that goodness was—of that peace, which, passing all understanding, no mortal imagination can conceive; but which she felt, and, gloryingly, believed, was the all precious reward laid up for the portion of the just.

"Would it only now be a fine day to-morrow," said Esther, getting into bed that happy night, "she'd give a guinea!"

It was a good, kind wish; and the sun could hardly do otherwise than find it in his heart to smile on it.

And Master Cheffins rubbed his hands rejoiced.

That ugly black cloud overhead all the evening before had frightened him terribly for his green paint. 'The Cottage' was a picture! For eighteen years now, come Michaelmas, that he had know'd it, it never had looked so pleasant like. If he'd only a-had time to give it another coat."

"It was a 'picture!' as it was. What could mortal heart want more?"

Nothing, good Esther, if such as thine, but the blue heavens smiling on it, and you, yes; and smile they did that heavenly day! Perfectly of Esther's mind, out burst the great Joy-Giver in all his glory, as, Strawberry and Tom and Jerry at the door, up trotted Huntworth, by appointment, round and rosy as an apple; when, Esther ready at last, and Rosalie having replaced that "great vulgar sprig of lilac" in the Beagler's button hole—"given him by she knew whom"—with a bud of her own choosing, "rather more like what a gentleman should wear, if he wore anything of the sort at all, and she wasn't clear at all that he ought, unless, may be, at christenings, and weddings, and, then, she didn't see there was much harm in "a white rose bud, or bit of orange blossom;" gay as larks, off they set for Fernleigh, amidst such a hubbub of glad eyes and greeting hearts, such ringing of bells, and bare and bowing heads on all sides, that well might Lady Fitzherbert's eyes be filled with tears, and her bosom heave almost to bursting; and

Esther, thrusting her hand into her pocket, be sensible of a great relief, as she "thanked her stars she had not forgotten the Preston salts."

And now, what with one thing or another, enough to do had Ben and Dolly. What with thoughts of the past, and thoughts for the future, well might Ben, in his best hat and new smart plush waistcoat, "of a Saturday" seem out of his wits; and Dolly, in her holiday cap and gown, "in such a flustercation, she hardly knew whether she stood on her head that day, or heels;" till, borne on the breeze, came the swelling shouts of *welcome!—welcome!* when, hurrying to the gates with palpitating hearts,—oh! what need of all those anxious agitations?

Taking a hand of each in hers, as she stood gazing round her, a moment pausing to control her feelings —"don't these," said Lady Fitzherbert, turning to Esther, "put you in mind? Poor, dear Lucy! How I love old scenes and faces!"

It was enough. Fairly rolled the tear-drops down those old, service-honoured cheeks; a simultaneous spasmodic twitching seized the corners of the Vicar's mouth; Lord Cecil hastily turned his head another way; Walter Pemberton and Aunt Gerty exchanged affecting looks of mutual recognition; Annie and Bella a closer pressure of each other's grasp,—while Esther, getting behind a clump of firs, added greatly to poor Rosalie's embarrassment, whether to laugh or

cry, as Huntworth caught her eye getting up a face; and a roar, of all things at that moment, would never have chimed at all with Esther's heartfelt sobs.

There's a time for all things—for joy and sorrow both. And now it was high time—the tears dried—for Lady Fitzherbert to smile her sweet acknowledgments at the pains that had evidently been taken, turn which way she would, to make her happy. "A picture!" indeed, it was at all points, as Luke Cheffins called it in the pride of the finishing touches, that now met her delighted gaze. What more pretty and pleasant, after the mansion, than the cottage? There is such a relief in great contrasts. Even Ben's barrican jacket and mother-o'-pearl buttoned striped plush waistcoat, and Dolly's funny short waist, straight skirt, and prim quilled mob cap were so picturesque! after James Lambert's rich-laced coat and vest, and Mrs. Dinah Norton's *parfaite toilette à la mode.*

To the eye and heart surfeited with fashion's fineries, there is something so refreshing in nature's simple clothing. A thatched roof, too, and "the smoke gracefully curling," and the background hanging wood, and the brawling trout stream at the bottom, and the pleasant hazel hedges, and singing groves, and gardens, and fruits, and flowers, and golden corn fields, and fat meadows are sights one looks in vain for in May Fair; and the thrilling of a

thousand gleeful throats greeting the ear on every side in sweetest harmony, sounds—even all Belgravia hasn't got to give.

And leave Luke Cheffins alone for making the most of his chances. Marksbury might well be proud of her painter. White and green! What colours loved Luke Cheffins like white and green? And, happily blended, with master touch like Luke's, what colours to beat them for your rural nooks? And there it was where the Vicar and Luke—otherwise excellent friends—could never quite agree. The Vicar would have had all the village, if he could, painted dark oaks and browns—Luke Cheffins, whites and greens. It had been quite a battle between them about "The Cottage;" till Esther, siding on the sly, with Luke, "recollected that poor Lucy had told her, the Twickenham Villa was painted white and green," which settled the matter, and high in Luke's estimation stood Lady Fitzherbert from that moment. He would have had all the barn doors and pig-sties to correspond, left to himself, and the dog-kennels, and chicken-coops, and water-butts—all his own were of a bright emerald tint; but this the Vicar wouldn't listen to, which were the only drawbacks Luke's perfect joy was marred by. Still, it was "a picture!"—and, as Ben consolingly said, "'twould be easy enough, wouldn't it, to give them all a new coat over alike, if she wished it, when Lady Fitzherbert came."

"No! there was not a fault, not an improvement could be made; except—and there Lady Fitzherbert was inclined to side with Luke—except in the pails and pans, and watering pots, which, being new, were red, a colour she thought hideous for a watering pot; she quite agreed with him—they ought decidedly to be green;" and, carrying them off in triumph, Luke got his revenge, and the Vicar smiled amen!

O novelty! how wonderful thy charms! What sovereign efficacy in a fresh face often, where all the specifics of Savory and Moore have failed. Here was the very thing! Like Lord Fitzherbert, when he first saw Annie's heavenly blue eyes on the Parsonage lawn, beaming with sunniest welcomes, Lady Fitzherbert thought she could pitch her tent contented, and live for ever at Fernleigh. "Was it not the very spot where the harassed spirit, wearied of its warfare with the heartless world, its vanities and vain glories, would flee for peace? Look which way she would, was there not a sweet smile greeting her at every turn? What an air of simple truth, and artless joy, and repose, and freedom, and contentment pervaded everything. What a relief, after the artificial, stiff, stifling forms and falsities of fashion, how delicious, how refreshing!" and Lady Fitzherbert drew a deep breath as if it really did her good. "What bouquet of Delcroix to equal that exquisite sniff of the new made hay? what tinted, corniced ceiling to compare with that blue, cloudless sky above

them? when saw they the like of it ever in Hyde Park? what sight like that peep of old Marksbury spires in the distance? what music of the Philharmonic to vie with the gushing melody of those joyous little songsters in the cherry tree? or with the lowing of the milch cows coming homeward to the milking? or the sweet soothing tinkling of the weather-bells? or the busy honey bees hum; or—or—"

"Ah! what indeed?" agreed Esther. "What sights or sounds—she always said so—what sights or sounds they could find to keep them in London, who needn't be there, always puzzled her. She hated London. There was the Lord Mayor's shew, the Vicar took her to see once at Pellatt and Green's in Saint Paul's Churchyard. She should never forget it if she lived till a hundred. She never was so disappointed! And what she suffered for six mortal hours—for she'd hardly touched a morsel of breakfast, to be in time—no words could tell. Dear! how she pitied the poor Lord Mayor, in that gingerbread gilt glass coach! Poor man! how pale and pulled he looked. No one knew how she felt for him. She didn't feel near so much for the Sheriffs, for they seemed more comfortable, and to like it more, they said. But the poor man in armour was painful! It gave her quite a turn. Only, they got a good dinner for it afterwards—that was something. And, oh, dear! the terrible noise, and roll

and racket, from morn to night, it made her brain dizzy even to think of it. No—she wouldn't live in London, not she, to be made Queen of England. Tastes differed; but she'd rather, then, a million times told! walk five miles any day to see the Marksbury Club go to church and back—all the men and boys in their holiday best, and the women, too, and girls in their white frocks and ribbons, come Whitsuntide,—than budge a yard, and that was true, to see the Queen herself go in state to Parliament house."

"And so, indeed," sincerely believed Lady Fitzherbert, "at that moment, would she."

"And that—talking of Marksbury Club, and of poor-houses—put Cecil Fitzherbert again in mind. He should not be happy till he saw his father's most cherished wish—and no less at heart cherished, and held sacred, by himself, a bequest he prized far, far beyond all his other gifts!—in a fair way to be fulfilled.—The Vicar had kindly promised him—"

"To think it over?—yes, yes," accorded the Vicar, "and to talk it over, too, with their trusty Cheffins, their body-counsellor and factotum in all such matters—their Digby Wyatt, and Owen Jones of Marksbury. True. And any morning his Lordship pleased, and Luke would give them an audience, there were plans in plenty, he believed, in Luke's bureau from which to pick and choose; and then,

with all convenient speed, he was quite ready, was Cheffins, to lay the foundation stone."

Here was another source of happiness in store, and well might Lady Fitzherbert's eyes fill again with thankful tears, and her heart dot down that day in its memory as one of the very happiest of her life; while Esther whispering "noble heart!" to Walter Pemberton, could have rushed, in the fulness of her admiration, and imprinted a maternal kiss on that proud cheek, had there been but half a shade more warrant for it than there was; though fifty such rogueish Rosalies were looking on, as, always on the alert for mischief, had, just then, got Huntworth by the button, and would have given a guinea out of her pocket for a bit of fun.

What with one promised source of happiness, or another, no wonder at Lady Fitzherbert hugging herself, indeed in the thought of her "cottage of content;" and, pressing both Esther's hands in hers—not a nook nor corner left unexplored—think the days long before she could begin to put in force all her praiseworthy resolutions for the time to come. What a blessing is that 'plenty to do!' The hours glide away so pleasantly that are profitably spent, and never had Lady Fitzherbert laid out hers to better purpose than at present. It would take at least a month, as Esther said, before she got at all settled at "The Cottage," and it is hardly too much to say

that that memorable month were by far the shortest four weeks of Lady Fitzherbert's life. Their joy was altogether of another sort to what she had ever felt before. Like all life-pictures, it had its shadows as well as sunshine. Nay, there were moments when that joy was tinctured so with sadness, that every smile seemed struggling through tears. But they were not the bitter tears of former griefs. They came now from a far other source, that brought a comfort with them even while they flowed, and which Esther knew the value of too well to wish to check by a single drop, even if she could. Oh, they were hallowed offerings, those heart-shed tears of self-correction and acknowledgment, that had a healing balm in them for every pang; "each one of which," Esther would say, "was a priceless jewel in her eyes, she would not rob her of to put the costliest crown upon her head. Like as after summer-showers—look at the precious fruits and flowers unnumbered would follow tears like those!"

And follow them they did. The slave of her imagination, Lady Fitzherbert had lived all her life in a sort of dream of self-delusions. It is a very prevalent sort of bondage, that slavery of the imagination, holding in perpetual fetters many wiser folks than Lady Fitzherbert. As long as wealth lasts wherewith to pay the piper well, its victims may dance and dally to the tune of it as freely and fondly

as they like; but who plays and ministers long to *needy* nervousness?—And, as Edith Fitzherbert dried her tears, and thought of what a fool she had been, she smiled, chastened, at her own folly; found a better use for her brain than in conjuring up phantom fancies; and for her legs and arms, than lolling, woe-begone, from morn to night on silken sofas, drenched in misery and millefleur; and for her money, too, than keeping in sweet humour her doctor and attorney;—and, so, well might smile content, and happy Esther chuckle in her sleeve for joy.

Sudden wakings are not always most agreeable. Lady Fitzherbert's entry into a new life astonished Norton greatly. But Norton might well wonder—dwelling only on the uniform memories of the last twelve years. Norton never took into account what Edith Hardwick had once been. Though, more or less, what they call "highly nervous" almost from her cradle, and imaginative, as her mind expanded, to a ridiculous extreme; had Edith Hardwick married a practical, plain-sailing man, whose path was up-hill work, and she had been obliged to bear her fair share of the burthen, he might have had many a worse help-mate in his time of need. Or, had she remained Edith Hardwick to that day, as in her father's house—his simple, active, plain, regular course of life had made her but a sorry patient for

her doctors. But the old Lord spoilt it all. As Edith Hardwick came to him, and as he left her, Lady Fitzherbert, there was an extraordinary difference; even her own father used to say sometimes, "it required him to look twice, to be quite sure it was his own blithe, joyous, saucy Edith."

The home in which she had passed, we think, certainly the happiest years of her life was little better than a cottage—a cottage *ornée*, granted, if that is any consequence. But a cottage it was in every form and sense, and as such they had always loved to think and talk of it, and no more. And now at every turn she seemed again to realize, though in colours far more mellowed and subdued, that sunny picture of her early youth—those innocent, artless, happy days of cottage life! and would sit with Esther for whole hours in poor Lucy's little drawing-room—a very *bijou* of its kind,—watching, with glistening eyes, the forms of their children in loving groups, making a heaven to them of every spot they brightened with their presence; and telling over and over the tales of bygone times, and of all her thoughts, and fears, and hopes, and wishes—and how good, indeed, had God been! And, now, how contented and grateful she was! and how she only wished Clermont would give her a life-long lease, and then she would let the Moorfield house and farm, and make up her mind to end her days, please

Heaven! where she was. Spare her but to live to see her dear boy happily married and settled as he deserved to be—which, as Clermont was getting well so fast, was the only thought that now gave her a moment's real concern,—spare her but to see that day—and, when it pleased Him to call her, she should leave this world she hoped in peace, and, she might say, without a sigh—without a sorrow,—except that she had not made a better use of it, which she knew she ought."

And Esther, giving heed to every word that fell from those dear lips, would, in loving confidence, repeat them to the Vicar ere she closed her eyes in sleep; and the Vicar would listen, and ponder them in his mind, and answer "ah!"—and "eh?"—and "indeed"—and "true"—and "we shall see;" but what more the Vicar thought about it, if he thought at all, required a far keener ken than Esther Lawton's to discover.

There is always a something in this life wanting. But for one thought Lady Fitzherbert had been happy. For the loss of her wealth—now that she had regained her best, her only treasure!"—she scarcely heaved a sigh. That shock had passed over, and on its ruins she had built a new house and home, against which the winds and waves should never more prevail.

Though Esther reckoned a good deal on the "new

life," and the home made bread and beer, and the blue heather and the bracing blows, her great fear, at first, had been of Norton, and the uniform old memories. But there her anxious love misled her. Poor Norton no less stood in need of the 'new life' than her mistress; and it was gratifying in the extreme to see, after a little time, and regularly taking a wine glassful of the quinine mixture daily before luncheon, that, but for an occasional allowable sniff at the Preston salts, you really would have hardly supposed, as Esther said, "either of them, and that was the truth, had a weak nerve in their bodies anywhere."

And now, but for one thought, Lady Fitzherbert's earthly peace was enviable, "Grant her but *that one wish*—spare her but to see her darling boy 'happily married and settled as he deserved to be,' and as she had hoped he would have been by then, but it had not pleased Heaven to grant that wish of hers—still, she wished Emma happy with all her heart!—and then she could leave this world, she thought, without a pang, except that she had not been a more trust-worthy steward of the abundant talents had been committed to her charge.

These were the words the Vicar pondered in his mind, as, day by day, he saw with paternal love and pleasure Cecil's increasing care to banish the clouds from Annie's brow—how inseparable they were—the

evident interest she took in his presence and conversation—his scrupulous avoidance—how noble!—of any look or word could be misconstrued—his entire abandonment of self on every subject—though—or the Vicar was mistaken, not usual with him—there were moments when, unseen but by himself, the heart too surely spoke out in those impassioned glances;—and then, lost in contemplation, he would, in the quiet solitude of his study, throw himself back in his chair, and there sit with his eyes half closed and his arms folded, till, a thought, seemingly, striking him, he would draw nearer the table, seize a pen, and cast up little addition and division sums again and again on his blotting pad—which proved, and erased,—up rose again the pet coronet and cipher, something more like the rules of heraldic art required, growing more palpable and perfect with every touch; till Esther peeping in—scratch would go the pen through it all, and, tossing it down—ah!—come in," he would say, "come in;—I want just half a word with you—where's Annie and Lord Fitzherbert?"

The sickle had done its golden work—the harvest was gathered bravely in—the happy harvest home was over,—but Clermont came not. Strange, passing strange! and the last accounts so satisfactory, so full of cheering promise—that, if all went well, they should certainly take their passage by the "Hercules," and be home again, all safe and sound,

please Heaven, by October. And October was come; and so, too, was the "Hercules,"—but where was Clermont?

And paler and more pensive grew Annie's cheeks as the weeks toiled on, and those bright, beautiful blue eyes, that once were never seen without a smile, where had vanished all their light and loveliness? Down-cast, or dimmed with the hidden tears that came and went by fitful paroxysms, as the heart one moment yielded almost to despair, the next, from the slightest promise, leaped with renewed hope and expectation, they wandered from object to object, in vain seeking a solution of the one all absorbing mystery. Even Cecil, her grand resource, was not enough. Not that the music of his voice had lost any of its sweetness; on the contrary, never had it possessed such a rich melody as now. But, though she listened as one entranced, its tones seemed to fall on her ear less heeded every day; or, if she heard them, a faint smile would be the only answer, and she would sit abstracted and motionless, or walk on in silence, till the sudden consciousness that she was selfish and unkind would recall her to herself, and then by some little winning word or act she would do her anxious best to make all the amends she could.

And none knew better how to interpret and profit by those languid smiles and little peace-offerings than Cecil Fitzherbert. And, without a cloud on his brow,

though with the storm at his heart, he would talk on —and on—and so enchantingly, that Annie would be again lost in the soothing dream his words called up; and when he left her side, as he often would, to run to Bella, or Aunt Gerty, her heart would feel to sink, and be sensible of a loss—the loss of a dear, kind, thoughtful, sympathizing friend, but for whose counsellings and comfortings she sighed to think how very wretched she should be. And then, when he joined her again, full of fresh hopes and smiles, her colour would be slightly heightened for a moment or two as she met his tender, earnest gaze—then pale again as marble, as, with a simple candour, more eloquent of the heart's meaning than all the plausible flowers of sophistry she had been wandering among, she answered,—" but October is past—the 'Hercules' has come—where is he?"

" On his way, as fast as winds and waves can carry him, make no doubt, to *home sweet home*," would Cecil cheerily reply. " Twenty things may have detained them—prudence on the doctor's part—or the 'Hercules' may have been full—or sailed too early—the next ship not so soon as was expected—or it had been obliged by stress of weather to put back, or in somewhere for safety on the voyage,—in our anxieties and impatience we made no allowances for casualties, —see the stiff winds they had had, and the thick fogs, off and on the last month or so." And Annie's eyes

would become restless and her lip quiver. "Yes, but see what splendid weather they had had since! There was the 'Crœsus,' looked for now almost every day. Norton had seen it in the coffee cup three nights running—wasn't that enough—what could they wish for more?"

True, Dinah Norton, whose soothsaying skill every one granted was something quite incredible! and who would have as soon thought of acknowledging her age, as going to bed of a Friday without a bit of fortune telling, had seen, three distinct and separate times in the coffee grounds, there could be no question of that, a gallant ship, full sail, ploughing the briny deep. But she had said nothing to Lord Fitzherbert—or, if she had, possibly he might not have deemed it worth a thought—of certain ugly rocks and treacherous sands of threatening aspect there present, too. They might mean nothing more than the stormy weather they had had, off and on, the last three or four weeks. To be sure, the wedding ring was wanting; but, then, there was not a single tear-drop anywhere—that was a great comfort!

And well that it was! for dark and lowering came November skies, with saddening portents sighing in every blast; when comfort, however compounded or conveyed, has an especial welcome; when, sing the sorrowing winds their funeral dirges to the dead and dying dismally as they may, who cares with

Hearts and Homes in unbroken concord, full of joyous choruses to defy them?—

"Hearts and Homes, sweet words of pleasure!
Music breathing as ye fall,
Making each the other's treasure,
Once divided, losing all.

"Homes, ye may be high, or lowly,
Hearts alone can make you holy;
Be the dwelling e'er so small,
Having love, it boasteth all."

And, boasting all — that happy *Home* — that kindred little circle of congenial *Hearts* round the Parsonage blazing hearth, and the wherewithal, and over, within easy reach on every side to bid dull care be gone—wherefore hung that heavy cloud over all their spirits, that dark, dull, drizzly November morning? as if they were pauper-poor, and cold, and fireless and hungry, and a thirst, like poor decrepit old widow Burridge, there, within a stone's throw opposite—and seventy-seven if she was a day—out picking up the wet sticks to make her a handful of live embers to warm her kettle with, to brew her a cup of tea; and, yet, with a cheerful smile on her still rosy old cheeks, as if she hadn't a trouble in the world. Wherefore? Because, gentle reader, as you know very well, "the battle in this life is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift." What, while

she gathered up her sticks, made the heart of Jenny Burridge snap its fingers at the raw cold mist and cutting wind? what glad thought hugged she so bravely there, to give that half cold cup of tasteless tea and bit of stale brown bread, in prospect, such a relish? We happen to know.

On his way to the Vicarage that morning, the postman,—and seldom tarried Isaac Horton at Jenny's gate—enough, indeed, to set all the neighbours at their wits' end,—had brought Jenny the long looked for letter from her sailor boy—for boy, though the Vicar had baptized him some five and twenty years ago, she always called him—to say, "he had come back at last, a Boatswain! and, ere that time eight-and-forty hours, hoped to press his dear old mother to his heart again and have her blessing." What, then, cared Jenny for the cold raw mist and cutting blast? what mattered it to Jenny what she ate or drank that day? So it is with us in this chequered life.—God, as Esther loved to say, is very good!—Jenny, gathering the wet sticks for her thankful cup of tea, had her heart's wish granted; and the winds and the waves might roar and run mountains high for all Jenny minded them.

What was there for the Parsonage, to give zest to their dainty meal that morning?—The Vicar's daily newspaper—that was all—and "oh! what a dismal day was that—how dark!—how dull!—how terrible
!"

And, with a blank face, Esther tore the wrapper from the *Post*, and, having dried it, handed it to the Vicar; then taking her seat before the urn, while the tea was brewing, and he ran his eye listlessly over its columns, Doctor Dunlop held Lord Fitzherbert by a button on the rug, relative to that little argument they were having after dinner the day before, as to the best way of administering the coal and blanket funds when the winter came, so as to please everybody; the Doctor being of opinion, "that the poor were very ungrateful," Lord Cecil, "that they would be better satisfied, he thought, if they paid, *in toto*, for what they purchased, if the only debt of obligation incurred were the debt they owed themselves;" while Aunt Gerty and Annie and Bella stood meditatively by with their hands before them, alternately casting rueful looks at the thickening fog without; then at the bright blaze crackling up the chimney, without a morsel of appetite either of them for breakfast, and caring, just then, no more at heart, we'll be bound, with all their seeming sympathies, for the coals and blankets, than did Waddle himself, in clover on the down cushion there, for poor old Nep, who, that his little highness might repose all the more at ease, kept faithful ward and watch, uncomplaining, outside on the mat.

And, "now, dears, then," said Esther, filling the tea-pot up, and drawing nearer to the table, "it's

my opinion—and so I told Winkles—the coals last winter were scandalous! for the money—nearly half slate. It's like robbing a church to cheat the poor in that way. I do think, if there's one thing more wicked than another, it's imposing on the poor. The blankets—there was no fault much to find with them. What can you expect—two yards wide—for six and four pence? There was the winter before last—when John Huxter had the job,—no—let me see—it was the winter before that,—the hardest winter, without exception, ever remembered for seven years—hardly a laurel escaped—the suffering was dreadful!—what the poor went through that winter is harrowing to think of. Well, coals were then—let me see—"

Good heavens! what ailed the Vicar?

Yes, what indeed? Though usually pale as parchment, there was a death-like hue in the Vicar's face at that moment that startled even the Doctor, who, hastening to his side, and looking anxiously over his shoulder, as he pointed with his fore-finger, to the passage he had been reading—"good gracious!" exclaimed Dunlop, also changing colour, and glancing anxiously round.

"What—what?" cried Aunt Gerty, the only one seemingly not tongue-tied—for there was an expression in the Doctor's look, as his eye sought Annie's, more alarming to Aunt Gerty a great deal

than even in the Vicar's. And Annie felt her knees tottering under her, and a mist gathering before her eyes, as, with one hand tight clasped in Bella's, she tried to read her father's features, struggling to command his feelings sufficiently to trust his voice. There was a breathless pause on all sides for a moment or two. But concealment was impossible; further hesitation could only make matters worse; and, after all, it was, at present, little more than conjecture—Clermont's coming by *that* vessel.

The Vicar's cheeks became a shade more earthly; but it was some moments before he could trust himself to speak. "Your eyes are better than mine," at length, said he, with a strong effort, and giving the paper to Dunlop. "These sea-losses require authentication."

Dunlop, after nearly stumbling over two chairs, got to the window. The fog was getting so thick, he might well be scarcely able to find the place. Aunt Gerty clenched her hand and stamped her little foot. "Ah! here it was. No, that wasn't it. 'Twould clear off after twelve, he'd bet a guinea, and be a beautiful day! The worst of the papers, was—or, rather, the best in this instance—they did exaggerate so tremendously—you couldn't believe one half they said. There were two shipwrecks only last month, off the North coast, all safe and snug in dock at that moment." Aunt Gerty could bear it no

longer.—"Yes, yes—well—" when, slipping suddenly from Bella's side, before he was aware of it—Annie, no longer able to bear the whelming torrent at her heart, stood, livid as a corpse, at the Doctor's elbow; and, glancing with the keenness and rapidity lent by the sense of crushing peril—O poor wrecked heart!—in large type you could have run and read—too terribly plain, too palpably true to be misconstrued:—

"LOSS OF THE 'CRŒSUS.' ALL SOULS ON BOARD SUPPOSED TO HAVE PERISHED"

—met her reeling gaze; and, without word or gesture, before the Vicar, starting from his chair, could reach her side, she lay dead, to all appearance, in Lord Fitzherbert's arms.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BURIED HEART.

NEWSPAPER reports of calamitous events assuredly "require authentication," as the Vicar said.

How the spirit, in despair, clings to the faintest gleam of hope against conviction. Oh! what the sufferings of that week were which immediately followed the breakfast scene at the Parsonage we have just attempted to describe, what pen can ever tell? Fifty fold more intolerable the agonizing uncertainty and suspense, than the stunning moment, with all its misery, that brings the crushing confirmation of the dreaded truth. To see the names of those we dearly love and cherish, and whom we have been fondly pressing to our hearts again, after long and perilous absence, included in the dreaded list of *Lost*, or *Slain*, is one of those bitter trials none can have a conception of but those whose lot it has been to meet it face to face.

And that fearful, fatal list of *Lost* was now in

too sure verity before the world; and included in it the names—the letters that compose which we must beg the reader's conjoint sympathy for with our own before all the others of the twenty-six to-day —the names, alas! of Clermont Onslow, gentleman; Andrew Brande, Surgeon; and one Claude, so called, in attendance on his master.

Reader, saw you ever your own name, or one you loved as much, in print, in characters congratulatory? If so, how felt you? Then will you understand, then the better feel the full emphatic force of our meaning when we say—poor Annie!—alas, poor Annie!

Well might all Marksbury and Fernleigh, and for miles around, echo—alas poor Annie! as with one voice, well scarce an eye be dry, or heart be out of mourning.

Woe, woe! when, with pestilential winds, come blight and mildew, nipping the young fruit of rich promise in the bud, dashing at a blow the fond hopes of countless anxious days and sleepless nights.

Woe, woe for Marksbury!—And the gentle generous heart, teeming full of fairest blossoms, thus to be nipped and withered in a moment; and at the moment, too, when its best hopes were at the highest, and joy and jubilations—all but within clutch, were awaiting it with greeting smiles and acclamations on every side.

Misery is not a theme we love to dwell on. Few

who have not some sad *souvenirs* on that score they would willingly dispense with. Poor Annie!

And now came the test of the worth of those priceless Christian principles which, under a loving and pious and painstaking mother's ever first and anxious care, had been her chief grace and glory from her cradle. What, though the heart of flesh break, if the spirit remain whole, rejoicing to the last in its best refuge? That was Esther's sure trust —that her sovereign solace. Never, with all her mother's doating love, felt she to love her precious charge so purely, so perfectly as then. Holy as she had always regarded a mother's love for her child, Esther had been ignorant till now of the full import and bearings of that hallowed trust. It seemed to supply the last link wanting, as it were, to unite their souls for evermore in the *Home* To *Come*—the *Home* to which her thoughts would now daily more and more incline, as she watched that fragile form, those fading cheeks, those lorn looks, those plaintive, uncomplaining tones, that heart-wreck,—and thought, how soon they might be together-sharers of the same eternal rest.

And no less anxiously watched the Vicar, though with other hopes, those wan cheeks, those woe-struck looks, those plaintive tones, that breaking heart, still beautiful, more beautiful than ever in its sorrow—so beautiful—Heaven seemed its fitting home alone, not

earth; and, in his closet, unseen, unheard but by One Eye and Ear, no less frequently and fervently on his bended knees, and with soul laid bare, than did Esther, poured Lancelot Lawton forth his daily prayers unceasing for his girl.

And those prayers, we may trust, were heard.

And time, the great healer of the deepest wounds, lent its restoring balm; and, though no art could recall their wonted bloom to those pale cheeks, their lost light to those dimmed eyes, elasticity to that once bounding step, their angelic smiles a-new to those sweet lips—though it was but the shadow of their own once happiest of happy ones that stood beside them;—Esther, after a while, was seen to bustle about again; the Vicar to walk decidedly less bent, and to talk oftener with his flock, and in a firmer and more cheerful voice; Lady Fitzherbert to be almost gay sometimes; Aunt Gerty cheerful; and Bella's lustrous eyes all but to sparkle again with gratitude and joy; till the pining spirit, bowing to its burden, bore it meekly, as though it hardly pained it; and then would Cecil, taking hope, succeed in winning her for a little while often from herself; and Annie would follow tacitly at his side wherever he would lead her; and, as he talked on—on the themes he knew she loved the most—she would seem to listen to him with deep interest;—then, as if suddenly recalling some lost thought, would draw him hurriedly away, and, taking

the path along the hill side to the "Bower," walk quickly on without a word; or, stopping all of a moment, sit down at some favorite spot—gather the heath sprigs and golden gorse around her into little nosegays—tie them separately round with her hair, while Cecil held them—and, collecting them together in bunches, shew them to him with an appealing look—gaze abstractedly about her for a moment as if undetermined — then walk fast on again — then check herself—and draw her cloak or shawl closer round her, as though with cold—and, turning back, hurry home again to give her treasures to Aunt Gerty.

And time went on. And every day brought its own duties, in the fulfilment of which the best comforter is found. And meeker, with its lapse, grew the Christian spirit under its load; nay, sometimes cheerful too;—and would sweetly smile as one who said—"amen, O Father!" from the inmost soul. "I am chastened, but not in anger—in love chastened—it is good for me—Thy will be done!"

And the dark clouds had passed over; and again through the mist and gloom peeped forth a ray of brighter prospects. And Cecil, overjoyed, hastened to his mother; and, throwing himself into her arms, unfolded all the heart he had to tell her.

What need of words, when every look and tone had long ago told their tale? "Had he his mother's

consent?—without which there could be no joy for him on earth."

"If that were all was wanted, his earthly joy might soon be perfect."

"Bless her for that! There spoke his own dearest, best of mothers! But torture him not by an *if*."

"How—if her heart—" and Lady Fitzherbert sighed deeply. "She had watched, she had studied it closely—she knew well what that tender heart was,—how if it were buried in the grave of—"

"His cousin Clermont? He would gently bring it back to earth again; breathe into it, by devoted love, and care, and patience, and perseverance, a new life; by merit, by unbounded affection make it all his own; and, once his—who was there on earth could rob him of his treasure?"

Again sighed Lady Fitzherbert deeper than before; for she knew the meaning of those impassioned looks and words too well to suppose, however exaggerated, they did not speak in earnest, and she trembled to think how little the heart that gave them utterance had been tutored to self-denial; and, raising her eyes to the portrait of her husband, she sat for some moments, with Cecil's hand in hers, wrapped in anxious thought; till a tear stole down her cheek, which kissing away;—in a gayer tone he said, "There—a tear, I declare. Now, what's that for?—and

your heart bursting, you know, with joy. Yes, yes —true, now—isn't it? There—there—you promise me—promise *us*—yes—I know you will—your consent—your blessing? Yes—you do—you do! Of course—that's true—you're right—with time—of course—with time. Fear—no—no—her heart's too young—too kind—too generous for *that*. No, no! I ask it not till *then*. But *then*—then you will—say but you will—yes, yes—I knew you would;"—and, having received by the silent pressure of those assenting lips on his forehead—a token he well understood how to interpret—all he then hoped for, off he went, with flashing eyes, and heart elate, back again to Marksbury—that, should the Vicar not have left his "Cuyp," he might catch him, with good luck, and have it all out and over before dinner—a piece of intelligence, on his part he, Cecil had little fear would much surprise, even if it took the edge, which was very doubtful, off his Reverence's relish for his college dumplings.

Though a Lord, as we have elsewhere had occasion to notice, Cecil Fitzherbert knew the use of his limbs; and, striking out in good earnest, he caught the Vicar, just as, returning his old-fashioned double-cased gold repeater to his fob, he was "in two minds whether to take the hill path homeward for his dinner, or let it wait ten minutes—it would not be longer—and go round and have a look how Luke Cheffins was getting on with the school-house."

Cecil was "tremendously *peckish*," as he called it, "after his walk," and, voting for the college dumplings with all possible dispatch, down they walked arm-in-arm together in pleasant chat, echoing every sentiment of each other's breasts, it was quite a treat of Christian love to hear them; till, coming to within bow-shot of the Parsonage, there were just ten minutes still good, if made the most of; and enough in all conscience with two hearts in such sweet union.

Less than half would have sufficed his Lordship. He never injured his cause by proving too much. The Vicar wanted no proofs at all. Humphrey used to say he could see through a barn-door. Five minutes?—two would have been ample!

To say the Vicar was surprised, would not be true. To say he listened to his noble pupil's declaration with mixed feelings, would be perfectly so. Mixed indeed they were, which may partly account for those agitated moments during which, grasping Cecil by the arm, he stood regarding him with a mixed look very difficult to describe. If Rosalie Bainbridge had been there, she would either have blubbered outright, or burst into a scandalous horse-laugh. For ourselves, we can understand it perfectly. Well might the good Vicar be for a moment overwhelmed. It was enough to overwhelm him. No doubt, the form

nor Clermont—his excellent, his oldest, steadiest,

best of pupils! stood before him—a hundred sorrowful recollections rushed through his mind, enough to bedew his eyes, and tie his tongue, and set his heart thinking sadly on the past. We should despise him had it not been so. Nor do we imagine but that Lord Fitzherbert was well satisfied as it was, more so a vast deal than if he had delightedly seized him by the hand, strained him, rejoicing, to his breast, and called him son-in-law.

Even had ambition so far blinded the Vicar's better judgment as to have made him regardless of appearances, which was not so, he knew what was due to policy, as well as to propriety and his noble pupil, too well, to jump into his offered arms the first moment they were opened. Gently laying his left hand, ungloved, on Cecil's cuff, as they approached the shrubbery wicket,—"You have indeed touched a tender chord in my heart to-day, my dear Cecil," said he,—"a very tender one! But for one thought—and in that I am sure you will sympathize with me—but for that thought—your poor cousin Clermont!—I need not say how glad—how happy—how proud I should be! to hear from your lips what you have just told me. But—" and here the Vicar's voice failed him for a moment;—"but let us hope, with *time*, and God's blessing, that wound, my dear Cecil, may be in a measure healed among us. You have done—and will do—all that kindness can, I

know—and for that our hearts bound with much love towards you;—and, come the time, please Heaven, that I can again see Annie—my child—" and here again the father's heart perforce flowed over—" my child;"—but the appearance of Annie and Bella, their arms wound round each other's waists, coming to meet them down the walk, putting a sudden stop to the fatherly *tête-à-tête*,—" Ah! here she is!" sighed the Vicar, "looking more like herself, I'm glad to see, dear child! We will talk more of this another day with your dear mother, Cecil,"—and, having kissed the fair cheek offered him,—" let's make haste in now to dinner, or we shall have Gerty getting philosophical all the evening," smiled he, turning towards the house. " Yes, and with reason, too;" so, drawing Annie's arm tenderly within his, the Vicar led the way, nothing heeding Gerty's tantrums, to the dining-room; and, placing her affectionately between himself and Cecil, made Esther's eyes beam again, to see " how much happier he seemed that day, and how he really did enjoy the college dumplings."

Nor was that otherwise than a day of brighter hopes, too, for Lady Fitzherbert. In truth, this had been an avowal she had for some time been prepared for from her son, and she was not sorry he had made it. A fond, anxious mother's eyes are keen and penetrating enough in some things, blind howsoever

they may be, almost to infatuation, in many others, where a little judicious maternal vigilance would do a deal of service. Cecil's marked admiration for the Vicar's daughter, with all his cleverness, had not escaped a wakeful, watchful mother's eyes like those, and there were times when she thought Esther must have seen it, too; but, as Esther said nothing, she was content to look on and let things take their course, in her heart believing, that, as the passion was only on one side, for the present, it would not outlive, with Cecil, the charm of novelty; or, if it did, his self-pride would be too much piqued, to devote himself irrecoverably to one, whom the probable chances were he might never call his own.

Such a declaration coming from him but a twelve-month back would have met with but one result; but those proud dreams were over, or, if not quite so, were so much mellowed down and modified by reason, that now, so far from looking at Annie, only as a pretty, lady-like, simple, modest, meek, methodical country girl, would make an excellent parson's wife, poor Lady Fitzherbert actually shuddered to think, what would become of that passionate heart had been pouring out its ardent hopes to her that morning, should it be as she dreaded—and the simple, meek, modest country girl had no heart left to give him in return. Still, she could not but recall to mind the many instances within her knowledge—and by

powers, oh, how infinitely inferior! where such a resurrection as Cecil fondly built on had happily occurred; and from that hour she would do her utmost for its accomplishment, if, on talking with the Vicar and Esther, it was their wish, too, as much as it was hers; and she could not doubt it for an instant—who would not be proud of an alliance with a Fitzherbert?

And Esther listened with astonished ears, and downcast eyes, and throbbing heart, and dared not trust her voice. And Aunt Gerty's brow grew clouded and her manner strangely changed, and, at times, almost unbearable her temper; till, caught in the fact, closeted in cabinet council one day with Esther, they both got such a lecture from the Vicar for their pains, that ever after they were fain, too, as Lady Fitzherbert expressed it, "to let things take their course, trusting in Heaven always to do with them as it seemed best to its wisdom and its love."

"A bride?" used Esther sometimes to musingly repeat to herself, as, sitting by the twilight, unable longer to ply her needle, with the tears swimming, the thoughts of past, present, and future would crowd into her heart; "a bride?" poor lamb! Yes, of the grave may be—a bride of Heaven;—and, clasping her hands together in her lap, her lips would move; but what they said—what asked—what prayed for—what not, was known to Him alone

from whom no secrets are hidden, and to Whose will alone she could say *Amen*, she felt, be the issue what it might.

And Esther, in her strong citadel of trust and safety, had no fears. And Aunt Gerty, finding refuge therein, too, and courage, felt strength given her. And Bella saw, and heard, and pondered deeply, day and night, on all she heard and saw; but, so that Annie smiled, she heeded not. And thus rolled the months away;—the only eyes and heart that saw and felt nothing of it all—except that Cecil was her kind, gentle, generous brother, and Bella her sweet darling, loving little sister—were poor Annie's own.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LOST FOUND.

THE shady nooks and corners where modest merit nestles in obscurity in great London town are many. To particularize some to the exclusion of others, were it possible, would be invidious in the extreme. To cite one even in a hundred, as *most* deserving, would be no less a work of labour than of love. It is very gratifying to know, that, though the exceptions are many more than they should be, the rule holds good pretty generally in the main—that there is little more fear of genuine merit missing, sooner or later, of its reward, than of empty pretension bursting all in good time—let it but swell itself big enough, like the frothy, hollow bubble that it blows.

It is enough for our present purpose, that, without a shadow of injustice, we can invite the reader to accompany us to a certain shady third flight, in a certain fine, shady old pile of brick and mortar, in

no less a fine, shady old locality, where many a genius besides Walter Pemberton has been content to work on patiently and modestly to fame and fortune, to pursue the even tenor of their way, to bide their time, confident in their own strength and honest purpose—come that right time—to lift them into somebody some day.

Gray's Inn, shady and sombre as it is, and giving the *pas* deferentially, as in courteous duty bound, to Linooln's Inn, and her sweet twin sisters the two Temples, has charms for the steady, quiet heart unknown but to itself. And here, on his third flight so snug, had Walter Pemberton—albeit competent, we know, to have descended, had he been so minded, a grade lower, which, in chamber phrase, means, uninitiated reader, some grades higher in the social scale, when Bumpton went over to the Square—built his cozy little nest, and feathered it, too, by all accounts, indifferently well. And, though one said, "how the deuce, Pemby, old fellow, can you hang out here?"—and another, "come along, there's just the set, with the right light, to suit you to a T down there—it's dead suicidal for the like o' you to bury yourself this way,"—Pemby wasn't to be shaken, stuck to the old place manfully, spite of all, worked away, and whistled, when in working mood, sometimes not a little to the annoyance of Erskine Spleen, above, who hated music, but always to the great comfort of

Mrs. Bopps, his laundress, who, when Pemby would come home at times down rather about the scandalous way in which they'd hung his pictures at the Exhibition! could she but hear him whistle again, declared "it did her more good," and we believe her, "than her supper;" and which Pemby thought evinced a heart so decidedly in the right place, that on he went whistling, and working—comforting, and comforted—looking up, never down—pressing on, despite all discouragements—his motto, *Forward*; till one day,—"oh, spare his poor brain!" as Lady Fitzherbert would have said—did see aright?—Yes, by Jove!—there he was, and no mistake, ye Gods and little fishes! next to Copley Fielding!!! That was a proud day in Pemby's life; and "didn't she always say so?" chuckled Bopps; "didn't she always perdict that room would be his making?" And so it was, in Bopps' sense, one way; and ever after that—"try to get him out of it—yes, they might—she'd give 'em leave would Bopps,—see if they'd do it, though."

That whistling while at work is not the idle thing some sulky folks suppose. Painters revel in it, whether of cottage fronts, or *Copley Fieldings*. Why, is a question open for opinion. It cannot be, with the *Cuyps* and *Copleys*, can it, for want of thought? That's impossible! Tell us, your *Watteaus*, too, or *Gainsboroughs*, or *De Wints* are fruits of no reflection? We know better. Try your hand, then,

at them, doubtful reader, and see what sort of a thing you'll make of it. There must be a magic charm in it, something astonishingly inspiriting in the production of *sweet effects*, rising up under the skilful touch with such wondrous power! to make one whistle. It is not recorded that Vandyke, Rubens, or Paul Potter actually whistled out loud over the easel, though there's no doubt at all they did occasionally; but this we can vouch for to a certainty—more than half a dozen great guns we could mention of this our own day, when they make a hit, not only whistle, but leap for joy, too, and snap their thumbs, and punch you in the ribs, half-crazy like—the creatures are so happy! The thing may not be very dignified *per se;* but all depends on *who* does it, and *how* it's done. As Bopps rightly argued, 'that makes all the difference.' She'd have punched her Jackey's head well, and served him right, if he'd dared to pitch a note, above his breath, of a morning, over the boots and shoes, and Jackey knew it. And, viewing it as a question of cause and effect, the distinction did Bopps credit. What heart, in the right place, but would bound again to hear a great man whistling? There's something so grand in great men's littlenesses! And that's no doubt how Bopps looked at it.

But we are wandering. About six months had been doing its best, since the loss of the 'Crœsus,' to restore *The Buried Heart*, to breathe into it the new

life, by unremitting efforts of care, and kindness to bring it back, wreck or not, to a brighter world of surer hopes and joys than ever; and even Esther had began almost to count upon the time when she might yet live to see the roses come back again to those pale cheeks, their wonted smiles to those sweet eyes and lips, playfulness to those tones, peace to that pining heart—"some happy days, she hoped, still, for them all in store;" and Lady Fitzherbert, to shudder less and less as the thought crossed her—what if those "ardent, impassioned hopes," as she called them, "were destined to despair?" and the Vicar to have sanguine expectations of succeeding, with patience and perseverance, in shewing Aunt Gerty—what, somehow, she wouldn't see; and, in short, the names of Cecil and Annie, in sweet union on every lip, were daily greeting him with louder congratulations whichever way he went; and not a gossip, from Tabitha Ludlam downwards to the youngest curly-polled little urchin in the village, but could tell you, "who'd be Lady Fitzherbert, come next summer."

It had been a hot day for May; and, after a fagging round of it at Somerset House, tired and dispirited, Walter Pemberton, again in the refreshing solitude of his own shady little nook, threw himself into a chair before his easel, on which stood a half finished *Watteau* piece, which, till that day, he had ate, drank, slept and existed to the tune of, such

sweet sustenance was there only in the thought of it. Now, to judge by his looks, he seemed to scan it with no loving eyes; and, seizing his pallet,—after a fixed scrutiny of several stern minutes, Heaven only knows what rash act was at his fingers' ends! when, lucky for the world, in peeped Mrs. Bopps, and staying the meditated stroke, "come here, Bopps," said Pemby, dejectedly—"shall I—or shall I not?"

"Oh, the sinful wickedness!" cried Bopps, starting back a step, and involuntarily grasping the uplifted arm of phrenzy, as Pemby, having dipped a monster brush into a puddle of dirty brown paint, was within five inches of the canvas, and committing a heinous robbery on posterity we turn cold to think of—"you wouldn't then—now, would you?"

"I would indeed."

"Then, I never! And there, Jacky knows, I've been a-saying to him and Grimps, only this very morning—of all the lovely hangels I ever clapped eyes on—why, that's her, then, in the white chip bonnet there and double daisies,"—and Bopps pointed with her left fore finger to a certainly very pretty, engaging-looking young lady—not unlike Aunt Gerty at all—sitting under a tree on the velvet lawn, looking up smilingly into the beautiful face of her companion angel, as yet but indistinctly appreciable in little more than outline, but evidently conceived, or

the coincidence was remarkable, with Annie Lawton running in his head.

"You do—do you—think her beautiful—really, Bopps?" asked Pemby, letting drop the brush.

"Beautiful! Well then, I never see—and that's the truth—but *one*—ask Grimps and Jacky, then—to equal her."

"Ah! And, pray, who was she?"

"Who? Just as if. Well, havn't I said it fifty times? Jacky knows. Ever since the day she came with Miss Gordon that day—don't you remember? that day, with Miss Lawton, and Lord Fitzherbert, and Mr. Onslow, after the Hexhibition? Law! I recollect it as if it was yesterday—and had luncheon—don't you remember—and there wasn't enough knives and forks—not by two,—her of course—that sweet hangel—and she was a hangel, if ever there was one on earth!—her, they called Aunt Gerty."

"Ah, by George!—yes—now I recollect," smiled Pemby, tossing down the pallet. "And you think it *is* like Aunt Gerty—*really* like her."

"Like!—ask Jacky then. Like?—yes—like as two peas—like as like can be!"

Pemby breathed again. A big load was suddenly taken from his breast. Confound those Turner tints! they have been playing the deuce with his self-diffidence. Now he looked again, there *was* a like-

ness—Bopps was right! That Turner had almost blinded him. It *was* like her!—and, folding his arms and throwing himself back again in his chair, while Bopps bustled about and laid the table cloth, off Pemby was going into a delicious trance; when rap, rap, rap went the knocker at his door, and, jumping up—"who's that I wonder," said he; "my brother perhaps—that's right—in the nick of time, by Jove! for a hot Murphy;" and, advanced half way along the passage to meet him—"merciful God!" cried Pemby, starting back, and every drop of blood in his body deserting to his heart, as, removing the broad brimmed white beaver from his forehead—

"Don't you know me?" said a familiar voice, almost choking with emotion—"am I so altered, then?"

For a moment Walter Pemberton stood as if transfixed, grasping, in mute amazement and delight, the hands held out to him between his.

"Clermont—Clermont Onslow?—as there is a living God—Clermont—our own dear Clermont!" cried he, "or his spectre!" and, falling into each other's arms.—"No, no—that is no spectre hug—no, no," sobbed Pemby; and, fairly giving way, while Bopps, with the corner of her apron to her eye, chimed in in chorus—we leave the reader to conceive the scene that followed.

"Let me be sure, though," at length, said Pemby,

rubbing his eyes, and holding the Lost One by the shoulders, at arms length—"be sure I'm not dreaming, and hugging an apparition to my heart;—stand still; no—genuine flesh and blood—every bit of it, as I'm living!—though a shade paler than I'd have it—the fire of those eyes, too—hardly Clermont's—not quite my brave beautiful Clermont's!—and, stay—what's become of all those thick, glossy, flowing chestnut curls?—Ah! true—the poor hot brain.—Well, well, what odds? they'll be coming again I wot, thicker and glassier by and bye than ever—what matters—as long as there's the same bold, open, honest brow there, unaltered—beaming with the same kind generous smiles as ever—though a thought, more pensive,—the the same sound sense, too, I'll bet a thousand—and that's a good large lump for me—in that head—and I'd bet fifty, if I had them—the same good, unselfish heart, beating warm, and hopeful and impulsive and confiding as ever beneath that old tweed waistcoat," —and catching it, overflowing, again to his breast, there's no saying what chance poor Clermont would have had that day of getting a morsel in his lips, of which—for in the thought of that happy moment he had hardly touched food for twelve hours—he sadly stood in need, had Bopps and the beef-steaks not made their appearance at this juncture; when, sitting down in good earnest, *vis-à-vis*, at the hospitable little round table Bopps had done her best, at a pinch, to set out

sumptuously—if Pemby had felt a doubt left as to the sort of spirit he was entertaining, whether corporeal, or otherwise, before they set to, we think the rapid disappearance of the beef-steaks at the rate they were going—and Bopps had not miscalculated—must have convinced him—no spectre on earth ever could have achieved all those platesful, but a real live one, that was certain.

And, now—Bopps and the dishes gone, and a *magnum* of *Lafitte*, 44, and a biscuit to talk over—Pemby could restrain his impatience no longer; he must have it all over again from beginning to end without missing a word;—so, after devoting two or three more bumpers to appropriate toasts:—

"Well, then," said Clermont, "you know all that happened to us up to the time I got the fever, lost my nuggets, and was bed-ridden there all those dreadful long months. Don't talk of it—it makes me turn cold all over whenever I think of it. Oh, Walter, what I went through! Talk of shutting out home, *home sweet home!* from the poor exiled, pining heart that has nothing else to think of to beguile the sick, sad, tedious hours away with for fifteen mortal weeks, in a wretched hut, on a hard bed, and, with but one exception, none but strange, and stern, and impatient faces round you—do it those who can. I couldn't, that you know. And that's how it was, no doubt, as poor Brande said, I didn't give him a fair chance.

That was true. But how help it? The more they told me I mustn't think—the more I thought. Who could stand it? I thought of their telling me I mustn't—you can fancy. Well, that was all my own fault. If it hadn't been for that, *home* I should have been, safe and sound again, as Brande said, in half the time, there's not a question.

"Wasn't he a right good fellow, that's all!"—and Clermont's throat was full—and, for a moment, while the tears filled his eyes, it seemed doubtful whether that tender straw stem between his thumb and forefinger, which he kept turning and twisting about in that odd nervous manner, could stand it much longer.—"Wasn't he a prince of a fellow—a right noble fellow—a friend something like—a father—mother—brother—sister—doctor—nurse—all, all to me! And there he floats, Walter—a corpse, in the deep, dark waters of the Atlantic—if the sharks haven't devoured him—that noble, generous heart! Poor Brande! What would I not give to have his handsome, intelligent old face here, between us, at this moment, Walter, to crown our happiness?"

"Not more than I would," responded Pemberton. "He sleeps well, nevertheless, enshrined in the hearts of us all. Be it where it may—what matters where falls the flesh? He rests well, with such a soul! whether on ocean's bosom, or mother earth's—what matters it?"

"True, in that sense, nothing," resumed Clermont, more cheerfully. "Rest well he does—no doubt of that—Heaven bless him! Well, to him I owe it, and Providence, that I am here to speak his praises at this moment. He got me round, and up again at last. His letters and Claude's told you all about that. You saw the *postscript*? Wasn't that enough to try a Saint? If they'd let me write a sheet full, I should have been better. There they were wrong; and it threw me back again. But up I got at last; and, joy, joy,—you can fancy—we should all be home again, sure as fate, by harvest home! And now, promise me, that what I'm going to tell you—" and, as he spoke, his face became ashy pale and his lip quivered,—"promise me," repeated Clermont, lowering his voice, and with a deep earnestness of manner that almost startled Pemberton—"promise me, you will never repeat to any living soul what I am going to tell you."

"It is sufficient that you ask me not to do so," said Pemberton.

"Well, then—our passage was taken by the 'Hercules,' as we wrote you, and we were to strike tent and be off for Sydney, bag and baggage, as to-morrow. Returning to camp after night fall from a farewell carouse among our friends, Brande, for a shorter cut—he was always such a chap for short cuts—shot across the stream some quarter of a mile up above

our quarters; but, missing the track, for it was dark as pitch, lost his way, and, plunging about right and left, got into a thicket, somehow, a good mile or more from any of the tents—for he was blind as a bat almost, without his specs, even at noon-day. Pulling up to take breath, and try for a landmark somewhere to steer his course by,—he thought he heard somebody or something rustling among the bushes and brambles down in a deep hollow, a sort of devil's punchbowl, as they call it, about twenty yards from where he stood; and, drawing a pistol—you know nobody thereabouts, with a head on his shoulders, and who wants to keep it there, goes about unarmed after dark,—drawing a pistol from his belt, he had cocked it ready—and by George you *must* be ready, and look sharp, too, I can tell you on the Turon—when the glimmer of a lantern bobbing about to and fro in the hollow caught his eye.

Brande was no coward, not he—a pluckier little fellow, though with a heart wouldn't have hurt a worm, never buckled belt on.—Here was enough to put a fellow's mettle up if he had any. A light, there, in the hollow, at that time, looked ugly rather. It couldn't be an ambush, though, for him; "what the deuce could it be? By Jove! but he'd find that out;" and, creeping softly on all fours forward, he got to within eye shot of a man's figure, down in the bottom, wrapped in a horseman's cloak; which, after

reconnoitering a bit, put down the lantern—took another sharp look round—and, seizing a pick, set to lustily to loosen the earth above him.

More out of curiosity than anything else, Brande crept a little nearer, and, holding tight by a bough, leant over to get a closer peep; when overbalancing himself, snap it went, and down he went, too, on his face, slap into the brambles. In a moment he was up again, when out went the light, but not before he'd caught a glimpse of the fellow;—and, getting home at last—and preciously I'd been pitching into him for keeping supper waiting,—"where's Claude?" said he.

'Here, Sir,' answered Claude, coming in, with the cutlets. 'They're over done a little more than you like, I'm afraid, but that's not Claude's fault this time, is it Mr. Onslow?'

'I supposed not, this time. Never mind—we'd make allowances—they smelt capital, all the same.'

'Either I'm blind,' said the Doctor—the coast clear, and Claude gone off to bed,—'or that fellow Claude's a good deal richer than we know of.' 'Ah, by Jove! how so?' Then, out came the night adventure at the hollow.

'Impossible! How could that be? He was in, and fast asleep over the fire, when I got back.'

'Well, if you won't believe,' said Brande, 'I'll tell you what we'll do.—A day don't matter a jot—

harvest home won't be over for that.—I've a notion in my head, will turn up something to surprise you, or call me a blind fool—I'll give you leave. We'll fix the day after to-morrow, my boy, for Sydney; do you hear that? Very well. And to-morrow, do you hear?—take a little trip to the *Hollow* together —now you twig, then?'

Just Heaven! Walter—by what wonderful and inscrutable ways does Providence bring to light, in its own good time and way, the hidden things of man's secret cunning and devising?

Next night set in dark and stormy, a wretched, bleak, black, blowing night—you wouldn't have turned a dog out. 'The very thing for us!' said Brande. 'Who'd put their noses out of doors, night like this, could help it, do you think? All right, my boy! We'll give Claude a half holiday, as well as ourselves, that's only fair.'

Pleased enough was Claude! and 'would go and say good bye to Blinks and Dawkins. Would they be home to supper?' 'No, he might keep it up till morning if he liked, so that he didn't make a fool of himself, and was all right and ready for the start on Thursday.'

So, off went Claude, and off we went, too, over to the Barringtons. And there we stopped, and kept it up right jollily over the rum punch; till Brande, looking again at his watch, at last we got away,—and,

taking a round-about, for caution, dropped down into the thicket about an hour before midnight, and, settling ourselves safe and snug in a thick bed of brushwood, overhanging the hollow, there we lay down, quiet as mice, to await whatever fortune pleased to send us.

An hour or more wore away—and such an interminably long hour I think I never got through in all my life! Not a sight, nor sound but the black sky over us, black as a wolf's throat, the dismal howling of the wind as it swept in furious gusts along the glen, keeping up such a devil's chorus among the gloomy old pine boughs overhead, you never heard; and so raw cold, it made the teeth chatter in our heads. I was getting sick of it; and just about starting to my feet, almost numbed, and lugging Brande up after me, *nolens volens*, and beating a retreat homewards; when, 'hark!' whispered he, laying a finger hard on my arm; in a minute after which—by George! didn't my heart jump into my mouth?—a tall, slight-made figure—as well as I could make it out by the dusky light of the lantern dangling from one hand, every other moment hidden by the flapping aside, as it was taken by the wind, of the long cloak that enveloped it from head to foot—moved slowly down the hollow, looking cautiously round at every step, as if fearing a surprise; and, gaining a spot of open turf ground some twenty paces further on, again looked round—sat down—turned off the light—and

there we were, all dark again as pitch, and still and immoveable as death for full ten minutes.

Ten minutes? Ten ages, by Jove! seemed those interminable ten minutes; for a terrible thought had flashed across me at the first sight of that long cloak. Then, came an indistinct sound of something on the move afresh, at the spot where I had kept my eyes rivetted all the while, till they felt as if they were two burning coals starting from their sockets. Then, the light was suddenly turned on again, and, seizing a pick at its feet, up rose the figure—listened, till I dreaded lest it should hear the thumping of my heart against my ribs—and, putting down the lantern, fell to to loosen the earth round about, as it had done the night before; but, after a stroke or two, stopped —glanced hurriedly round—and, seemingly satisfied, on went with the pick again; till, throwing it aside, up came the shovel, and down it went into the ground. Then, there was no further pausing. I'd have given the world if I could have seen the features of the digger. An icy thrill ran through every nerve as I watched, with the cold drops on my forehead, every bend, and turn, and heaving of his body. A dread, of I knew not exactly what, had crept over me; my heart beat so violently I thought it would have choked me—I could stand it no longer, and must have sprung to my feet, at all hazards—such a state of nervous excitement was I getting into—when, all of a moment

—just as, having thrown down the shovel, the figure, lying on its belly over the hole—the better, I supposed, to lend all its weight in hauling up something it was in search of—had got in its grasp,—two men—miners by their dress as well as we could make out, rushed down the hollow, and falling headlong on the cloak, a dismal cry—rings yet in my ears, Walter, as I think of it—echoed through the glen.

Up, like a lion, Brande, calling me to follow him, leaped down the bank, clearing, both of us, at a bound, every obstacle before us in a manner, by George! makes me shudder now to talk about it. The rest was easy work. Another moment, and it had been too late—the cloak had never had a hope, which now it has, of, by penance and amendment, Heaven's pardon. Yes, Walter, Heaven's ways are very good! That was something gained—not a bad night's work at all—a treasure found—of value far beyond any just then poor Andrew had his eye on. That dismal cry! Just Heavens! it rings in my ears still. Another yell of anguish from the cloak—the knife was at its throat. In self-defence alone was their justification for it, otherwise, 'twould have been a frightful, fearful deed! Either, we must have been conquerors, or conquered—either our bodies must have been left in that wild, wizard glen—if not found before, peradventure, by some rambler—food for the vultures and the ravens,—or the Messrs. Blinks and Dawkins

It pleased Heaven to decide for us. A shot from Brande's pistol had sent Blinks to his account; but not before he had got a deep gash across the temple brought Brande bleeding to the ground. Rushing fiercely on me, as I ran to his assistance—for I thought he was killed—Dawkins would have had us to a certainty with his *bowie* in another moment; when—Claude's hands freed by Blinks' fall—though staggering faint with loss of blood, for he'd been desperately mauled;—whiz, just in the nick of time, went his ball close to my ear, and, finding a home in the villain's heart, up he leaped like a rocket in the air, and, coming down again, with a shriek toppled head foremost over his comrade's corpse.

You shudder. Well you may. So should I once. Sad and shocking sights are too common," continued Clermont, after refilling his glass and draining it, which brought back the colour in a measure to his lips,—" are too common on the Turon a vast deal, to shake the nerves much. But, horrible as it was, Walter, to see those two ruffian corpses—in death, as in life, united—one wicked soul, as 'twere—one self-sought sacrifice to sin and perdition—there lying across each other in close fellowship—struck down by their own red-right-hand—O Walter, it was nothing, as a lesson, to the abject spectacle of terror, of condign chastisement, of righteous retribution there, by their side, prostrate, powerless, and cowering,

covered with shame and confusion, at our feet, that now, shuddering within itself, in broken tones of bitter shame, and woe, and overwhelming misery, appealed to us for 'mercy—mercy—mercy!'

There lay revealed to my astounded gaze the root of all of it—the gold—gold—gold—my own—yes, my own accursed treasure, Walter—how dearly bought its gain—its loss—its blood-stained restitution.

Oh, Walter! how think you I felt at the restoration of my treasure? I could have spurned it from me, Heaven is my witness, with my foot. And, as I gazed afterwards on that poor, abject sorrowing sinner, on his sick bed—heard his terrible confessions, Walter—how terrible, I dare not, may not tell you even—his vows of penitence, and contrition, and amendment, and fidelity—and believed him, Walter—yes—as you, too, would have forgiven him, I know—believed him;—I made a vow—a solemn vow—and I will keep it, Walter—wanted I bread, that I would never touch one farthing of that gold!

I was right? Yes, yes—I knew that you would say so. Now I am happy. I have a notion in my head—what I will do with that gold. There it lies at the wharf with my other baggage. It shall be a joy, a *blessing* to me yet. Then, a treasure *'twill* be in good earnest, Walter, won't it?"

"In such hands I think I may safely answer yes," responded Pemberton, refilling their glasses as he

noticed Clermont's still pale cheek. "There, drink that down. Yes—it *will* be, yet, a blessing! no doubt of that. And, now, about the 'Hercules.' You couldn't get off by her. We always said so?"

"No. Though poor Brande's wound was nothing much to signify, Claude's was an ugly affair. In less skilful hands and kind than the Doctor's, it had been all up with him. As it was, he was a good month or more in bed. Then, he got about again; but was too weak to travel for at least another month."

"What a turning of the tables!" exclaimed Pemberton. "With a grain of heart, how the fellow must have felt it!"

"He did, keenly! And what a sweet revenge wasn't it? That's what I call a revenge. Often as I sat by his sick-bed side, I used to catch his eyes fixed anxiously on me, and trying to read my thoughts; and, then, when I turned to him smilingly —for I could see it was genuine—and took his hand, and spoke kindly and encouragingly—the tears would roll down his cheeks; and, then, by Heaven! I wouldn't have exchanged the sweet triumphant joy of those moments, Walter, for all the wealth of the world, no, that I wouldn't!"

"And what, think you, meant he to do?" asked Pemberton, "had he got safe off with the tin box?"

"Carried the contents with him to Sydney, in his

baggage, to be sure; there sold it; and had enough, and over, to marry Mrs. Dinah, and set up like a gentleman when he got to England."

"And thus to be made an honest man of! *'Twas* the finger of God! my dear Clermont. You may well call it a *sweet revenge*. It was. And he confessed all?"

"All—all," said Clermont, a dark shade passing over his face as he spoke, and relapsing for several moments into thought, as if the question was tortures to him. "Yes all, Walter—a deal more than I may —than I dare ever—than I ever will let any living heart know, Walter, but my own."

"I do not seek to know what you do not choose to tell me, my dear fellow," returned Pemberton. "You must permit me, though, to have my own thoughts. But your cousin Cecil—had *he* no suspicions how the tin box went?"—and, as he put the question, Walter's shrewd, penetrating eye read to the bottom of his young friend's guileless soul.

"Spare me—spare me, Walter—for pity's sake!" implored Clermont. "Ask me no more. They must look deeper far than Clermont Onslow's, can plumb the deep depths of cousin Cecil's heart."

"'Tis a dark, deep, dangerous pool, that heart, I'm thinking, too," replied Pemberton, in a sad tone. "But never mind," continued he, after a moment's

thought,—"what odds, now? You got safe out of it, and off, thank Heaven, at last?"

"Yes, as I told you, by the 'Crœsus'—and a splendid ship she was! You know the rest. It was dreadful weather, you say, on land? Oh, Walter, you may read of storms, and tempests, and shipwrecks; and fancy, in your snug, safe homes, round your cheerful, happy hearths, in your warm feather-beds, you can picture to yourselves what they are—their horror—their hopelessness! The thought of it even there—have you a loved one out at sea, when the winds howl and roar and rage around you—blanches your cheeks, and draws the prayers, if you never prayed before, to your trembling lips. Pass one dreadful night—such a night as that on which the 'Crœsus' went down—amidst all their worst of horrors,—then, and then only, can you ever have any imagination what those awful shipwrecks are. Those are the schools, Walter, for your Atheists and Infidels. Merciful Heaven! I saw men, who, that very night, if safe ashore, would have ridiculed and insulted their Maker for mere pastime, down on their knees, with uplifted eyes and hands, beating their breasts and tearing their hair, prostrate supplicants for mercy at His feet. Oh! let a man, Walter, would he be taught to know what it is to be without a God, be out, as we were,

such a night as that, when, on the brink of eternity, every hope but ONE, is sinking under him for ever. Then, see him—then, hear him—then, ask him if he believes there is a God? It was dreadful! dreadful! Walter."

"You may say that," agreed Pemberton, deeply touched with Clermont's genuine fervour. "Talk of a Providence—what an escape was yours! There Claude proved, indeed, his earnest contrition, and fidelity, and attachment."

"Indeed he did! There again I owe, under Heaven, my life to him. Lashed to two spars he had tied fast together with wonderful nerve and forethought at the last moment, as I told you, scarcely five minutes before all was swallowed up, for fifteen hours we were tossed about like two reeds at the mercy of the waves; till, nearly dead, we were picked up by the American brig—good luck never leave her!—running, as I mentioned, for the Baltic. Then, where was *home sweet home?* Tied again by the leg to a sick bed at Cronstadt, and no good, kind, skilful Andrew Brande to do for me; for weeks almost at death's door, and Claude sick, too, with the low fever,—where, then, I say, Walter, was *home sweet home?*—far off—oh, how unattainably far it seemed, till sometimes hardly a shadow of hope was left, Walter, we should ever reach it more. But we *have* reached it, Heaven be thanked!

—somewhat older, though not much for that, certainly; but oh! ever so much wiser, and better, both of us—I can't tell you how much, Walter, than we left it."

"Well, that's something gained to boast of," smiled Pemberton, "well worth having."

"You may smile," said Clermont. "You don't know what I've learnt."

"Yes I do. What will profit us all immensely, no doubt of it, by and bye. We'll have the benefit of it all in good time, my dear fellow. But now let me tell my story; and, then, be off as fast as wheels can carry you, and set the Marksbury bells a-ringing, in good earnest."

"My poor dear mother!" sighed Clermont. "But for that thought, Walter—"

"Your joy would be without a cloud. Best, be assured, my dear Clermont, as it is. Think—believe—you do,—the same Hand that has brought you to us—wisely, and mercifully took her. It is all, in great love, ordered for us. Tell me—think you, with all the love she had for you, she would, if she could, exchange the Arms she is in now even for your embraces, my dear Clermont?"

"No, no!—that's true—I know that," said Clermont, regaining his voice, and gulping down a large lump in his throat,—"I believe that. And—and I've been thinking, too—what a mercy I didn't get

the intelligence of her death while I was so ill. It would have killed me; and so said Brande."

"They did wisely, very, in keeping that back. But how was it those other—those former letters never reached you; nor yours us, for so many anxious months, eh?—till poor Lady Fitzherbert—and well she might be—was distracted almost?"

"That—that," hesitated Clermont, his face flushing, and then turning white as marble,—"was a mystery—a great mystery, to me, Walter, as well as you, for a long time;—and so—and so—it must remain—that's all—for any account I can give you of it—a mystery, among some other *mysteries*, my dear Walter, must go to time's end unrevealed, for aught I shall have to tell about them. Nay—ask me no more."

"Ah! I see—I see," said Pemberton, thoughtfully;—and then, in a brisker tone,—"Well, well, what odds now? Let's think only of the present. Zounds, though! how, in the name of conjuration, can you have *the treasure* safe and snug in tow at the wharf, eh? and all went to the bottom—that's a puzzler."

"Easy enough about that," smiled Clermont. "You're not so green as to suppose we brought the nuggets with us all this way. Bless you, no. There they are, or what's as good, in safe oil-skin, my boy, just as they were tied tight about me by Claude,

shrewd lad! after the weather threatened—in the shape of good Sydney bills on London—that's your sort, Sir. Poor Brande put us up to that. Not a bad dodge, eh? And now, then, tell us all about dear old Marksbury."

Knowing already as the reader does, who has not skipped over it, the "all about dear old Marksbury" that Clermont's heart yearned for, we need only leave to be imagined the feelings with which he listened to Walter Pemberton's home sketch, knocked off in his own truthful, graphic way; till, nothing more left to tell about:—

"Come, then—there's an end to sighs and tears on that score, let's hope, for ever," said Pemby, jumping up. "It's time you were off—that's true. But—" and here he grasped Clermont's hand, as he stood with glistening eyes regarding him fondly for a moment in silence before bidding good-night;—"but have a care! There has been sorrow enough, by Jove! and over, for one while. Have a care man! their hearts down there—at least some of them—arn't half as hard, remember, as yours and mine. Can I trust you? You recollect how Huntworth's wood spectre frightened that giddy goose Rosalie? Would it be better, eh? to write the Vicar a line first? His nerves are tough as any of them. No, by the bye, now, I think—better not. Well, you've learnt a great deal, you say. You're sure of that? Let's look at

you—feel your pulse—aye—and your heart there. 'Gad! how it thumps! Can I trust you? It's easier to bear grief—you've learnt that, too, havn't you? you wise man!—easier than joy a hundred times—discreetly wisely. Well, let's see—yes—I think I may. There, now—go then—go, and God's blessing with you. No, stay. By George! I'd forgotten almost—here—come here a moment. At the old work again you see. Can't help it—love it—love it dearly as my life. Look—eh—like any one that you know?"

"The villain—the monster!" cried Clermont, clapping his hands with delight. "See if I don't tell Dan, then—infamous!"

"Tis a wee bit like, now, isn't it?" said Pemby, taking a fond squint through his closed fist. "'Gad, Sir, what do you think?—you havn't heard, I'll bet—they hung my Pastor's Pony next to Landseer."

Clermont was gone. Returning from the last peep at his coat tails over the banisters to his easel, Walter Pemberton stood for a minute in a sort of giddy, ecstatic maze; gave another long, fond, look with both eyes wide open, at the picture; and, throwing himself into a lounge chair in a state of blissful feeling sets description at defiance, fell back into himself for a delicious half hour; when the soothing panorama of joys, past, present and to come, gradually growing fainter and fainter to his nodding gaze, he dozed calmly off; and, as the twilight

deepened, dreamt a curious dream. He dreamt there was a grand wedding somewhere, he couldn't exactly quite make out where. One moment, it was at Marksbury—then in the wizard hollow on the Turon, which troubled him exceedingly! And there was a confused pealing of bells, and loud shouts and yells, and laughing, and crying, all mixed together. And there was Annie in her bridal dress, oh, so heavenly beautiful! but pale as death; and Bella, and Rosalie bridesmaids; and Huntworth with a monster favour in his breast button hole; and Mrs. Rodney hanging on his arm; and Rosalie didn't seem at all to mind it, which bothered him again considerably! And Lord Fitzherbert stood, in full dress, and with white kid gloves on, smiling at the altar; and, then, Annie began to weep; and the Vicar, in his surplice, and with a prayer-book in his hand, to frown and scold; and Esther to wring her hands; and Aunt Gerty, in deep mourning, to laugh;—and, then, the dream changed—and Aunt Gerty was all in snow white, with a wreath of double daisies in her hair, changed, too, and not Aunt Gerty, somehow, but her picture at Somerset House, just over Turner's *Hades*, he thought they called it; and he wanted to gaze on her, but couldn't—the *Hades* blinded him! and he *felt* the hot tears in his eyes—and he turned round to hide them—for he wouldn't have had her see them for the world—and there she was—and the bells were ringing, and the boys and girls shouting, and

clapping their hands—and there she was—walking away—arm in arm—oh tortures! with Dan Dunlop! and he tried to call out, but couldn't—his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth—he was choking. Then, again—they were in Marksbury old church; and there was Annie again, too, at the altar; and Mrs. Rodney was gone; and Huntworth had Rosalie, now, by the hand; and Bella was whispering apart to Blinks and Dawkins, when the organ suddenly began playing—open flew the church doors—and a tall spectral figure, in a long horseman's cloak and slouched white hat, stalked up the aisle. "Fiends of hell!" cried Cecil Fitzherbert, springing like a tiger at its throat—while louder and louder rose the shouts, and laughs, and yells—and, louder above all, a piercing scream from Annie, that rent the old church from floor to ceiling top! Then up ran Aunt Gerty to him, all in white, and led him to the altar; and he took her hand; and was going to put the ring on her finger—oh, how sweetly she smiled on him! then, suddenly, the face changed—how—what—where was he?—the deuce!—it was not Aunt Gerty—fire and fury!—it was Bopps! and, jumping up, and rubing his eyes, "confound it!—is that you, Bopps?" yawned Pemby, considerably relieved. "Dreams go by contraries, don't they, Bopps? Then, by George, Bopps! we shall have a glorious merry-making soon—you mark my words, Bopps!"

CHAPTER XV.

YOUNG JEM AND OLD NEP.

THE sun shone bright and warm into Lady Fitzherbert's pretty vine-trellised bed-room window that sweet May morning after the day recorded in the last chapter; as Norton drew the curtains back, and, lingering for a moment or two to greet Marksbury old spires in the distance over the elm tops, thought to herself—at which she would rather be at that instant, where she was then standing, or in dear Hill Street, Berkeley Square?—still, through all, endeared to her, beyond every spot on earth, by a thousand never-to-be-forgotten recollections!—and Dinah Norton could not repress a sigh.

"Heigho!" exclaimed a soft voice, in sympathy, from the chintz bed within six yards; "heigho!"—and, raising herself up on the pillow, in a tone rather of languor than of sadness, "a nice day again, isn't it?" asked Lady Fitzherbert, pointing to the table for her *vinaigrette*.

"Delicious! my Lady," replied Dinah, turning away reluctantly from her landscape musings.

"Strange, isn't it?" said Lady Fitzherbert, again, heaving a deep breath. "How close it is this morning! I ought to feel so well; and, yet, I've had such a load, such an unusual load at my heart—and I can't conceive why—for the last two days. The camphor pills are no good at all. Nothing does me good now. I think—I'm certain—something *must* be going to happen, Dinah."

This "something going to happen" was an expression so frequent on Lady Fitzherbert's lips, when a little low-spirited, or fretful, that it had long ago lost any very great terrors for Dinah Norton.

"It's a sure sign always with me," continued Lady Fitzherbert, crossing her arms over her bosom and reclining languidly back on the pillows, as Dinah remained dutifully listening. "It's *not* fancy—I know you will say that! No, nor the tart crust; though I do think—and you must tell her, for I can't find it in my heart, she does seem to take such a pride in it—Dolly makes her crusts too rich. They never agree with me, those rich butter crusts. But that's not it now. I scarcely took three mouthsful yesterday."

"You don't eat enough, my Lady, not near!" condoled Dinah. "I shouldn't keep any flesh on my bones, and that's true, to live as your Ladyship do. It might have been, mightn't it, the cream?"

"The cream, child? Poh! Cream never disagrees with me, that you know. What's o'clock?"

Dinah consulted the little French cuckoo-clock on the mantle-piece. "Just going to strike nine, my Lady."

"My patience, so late, is it? And Lord Fitzherbert been up and out these two hours, I'll be bound. He'll be famishing, poor dear fellow! Stay —let me see.—Yes—I think I'll have a cup of chocolate now before I get up—that'll refresh me; though I haven't the least appetite. Heigho! Reach me that book there. No—the one next to it with the pink cover—that's it—*Pearls of Great Price*. And stay—let me see. Yes—you'd better tell Lord Fitzherbert not to wait for me. He can come up presently when he's had his breakfast, if he wants to speak to me. He's in his room now—I just heard him go in. Is the post come?"

"Yes, my Lady, more than half an hour ago; but only the newspaper, and a letter for his Lordship."

"Nothing for me? So much the better," sighed Lady Fitzherbert, settling herself more comfortably for the *Pearls*. "I can't endure letters now. I used so to like them—just raise the under pillow a little—that's it;—for one gleam of joy, how many heart-aches do they bring?"

"That's true! Heart-aches, yes, indeed!" sympathized Dinah, "your Ladyship may say that. There now—it seems cruel, but it's the truth—I

never had but *two* letters, since I was twenty, were worth the postage."

Dinah stopped short, with one hand laid flat on the counterpane, and gazing hard at it, lost in reflection, as she spoke. But Lady Fitzherbert was not in a listening mood that morning; moreover, had recollection of having heard some story of the same sort a dozen times before, and, though with not a bit of appetite, wanted her breakfast.

"Ah! child," said she, "many might say the same who merit quite as much as Dinah Norton. I think, do you know—I think—I could eat a nice new-laid egg this morning, and a bit of Marmalade. And, when the Doctor comes by—tell Ben I'll see him."

Dinah's eyes sparkled, for Dr. Dunlop was a great favourite of Dinah's.

"You really do all think him clever, don't you?" asked Lady Fitzherbert, sighing deeply, and laying down the *Pearls* on the sheet, with her forefinger between the leaves.

"Clever!" exclaimed Dinah; "my Lady, it's fabulous, that it is, as James Lambert says, what he knows. A head?—my gracious! hasn't he, that's all? It's wonderful. I never saw such a head for a doctor, and that's the truth, on mortal shoulders. Yes, and heart, too, as ever beat in mortal bosom. There now—if I were on my death bed, then, to-morrow."

"God forbid, child!" involuntarily ejaculated Lady Fitzherbert, re-opening the 'Pearls.' "What would become of us? Yes, yes—so Esther says—so—"

"So every body says," pursued Dinah. "Yes, and such a little head, too. It's downright miraculous where he puts it all in. It's the little heads always, I do think, have most in 'em. It's different with those large, long Scotch heads, so long and dreadfully learned it frightens you to look at them. And he's a true Scotchman, too. What that little Scotch head knows passes all belief."

"Of some other wondrous things than its rightful craft, mayhap," smiled Lady Fitzherbert. "Ah, well!—and what sort of a lady is Mrs. Dan to be? You've settled it all, I'll warrant me, long ago, without Aunt Gerty's leave?"

The truth is, without further mystification—and we mention it as a proof of Dan's no less amiability than intelligence—Lady Fitzherbert, going into Dinah's *sanctum* unexpectedly one evening, had caught them in the fact. There they both were, with only the little round mahogany claw-table between them, and an old dirty pack of cards on it, telling fortunes. Hear it, ye great, grand Æsculapean Dons of May Fair, and blush for your poor village brother, if ye will. Dan Dunlop heeds not your virtuous indignation, sirs, a rap! Blush on. Dan's definition of a great heart, sirs, is the same as ours—*great*

enough, sirs, *to be little*. There he has you, ye grand Dons! fairly on the trip! No, no, not a bit was Dan "flustered," as poor Dinah trembled for him, for a moment, by the discovery of her Ladyship. You feel your pulses one way, ye great Dons!—poor Dan another. Both of you for one pay. So that you both feel them honestly, so that ye sneek no more for sovereigns, O ye Dons! than did for shillings brother Dan, blush not either of you; but, loving each other with true Christian brother's love, go on feeling your pulses how, when, and where you will; what matters, so that your patients pay you well, and you prosper heavenward?

Yes, and heartily Lady Fitzherbert laughed, which did her infinite credit, for in her heart she loved a bit of fortune-telling as much as Dinah; and it would never have done for her to have pulled a long face, at what, in all probability, was to be the very thing next Friday in request, to send her happy as a Queen to bed herself.

Nor was Dan such a noodle, not he, with that Scotch head upon his shoulders—no matter what its calibre or consequence—to have run the risk of losing that five shillings *per diem*, for the next six weeks, pulling a long phiz, and sitting down, grave as a judge—what would have been the use of that?—to talk Dinah Norton out of her senses. No, Dan knew better on which side his bread was buttered

than that; and if Mrs. Dinah could brew a glass of whisky toddy something like, yes, and find him, too, all in good time, a dark-haired maid to wife, rich and handsome as Aunt Gerty—why not, pray?—where was the harm in that? Where indeed? All the harm we ever wished them, was—that they might get her.

"You think—you do, really—he could give me something for this load here?" sighed Lady Fitzherbert, laying her hand on to her left side.

"Try him, then, only try him," advised Dinah. "Look at the *poor* he cures by dozens."

"Ah—well—?"

"Well—don't that show clever?"

"Are *they* so difficult?"

"Not *they*—no!" said Dinah, impressively—"not *they*, poor things! They're easy enough, God help 'em! It isn't a fool, though, does good every day, for nothing, in this life, is it? That's what I call real goodness—doing good for good's sake. Not a penny for it. Don't *he* do that? Don't that, then, show love of his art? Isn't that just how it is, as your Ladyship says, Dolly makes such pie crusts? Don't she love it dearly, too?"

Lady Fitzherbert smiled; and, looking up from the *Pearls*—true, true," said she, "Dolly does! Now, go, then, and get me up the chocolate."

Lord Cecil's door was ajar. Dinah paused a

moment—peeped in; but, seeing his Lordship's brow overcast, as he stood by the window earnestly reading a letter in his hand, which she concluded had brought something to anger him that morning, merely delivered his mother's message, that he was not to wait breakfast for her; and, closing the door after her, went down stairs — nothing further heeding a circumstance so usual as grave looks, with his Lordship, over the post bag,—to get her Lady's breakfast.

Having read, and re-read the letter in his hand several times without the movement of a muscle, Lord Fitzherbert was lost in deep thought for a minute; then, having run his eye over it again, he crushed it savagely in his grasp, and, pacing the room furiously backward and forward, seemed working himself up to some desperate resolution. Suddenly, he stopped short, and, again tearing the paper open, stood stock-still as before for some minutes, as if undetermined; during which we took the opportunity, specially permitted us, to peep over his Lordship's shoulders, and as follows was what we gathered, word for word.

"This will take your Lordship by surprise. Hope and trust will not be too much for your Lordship's delicate nerves; but couldn't contain myself for joy!! Your Lordship may depend on its correctness. Pledge my honor! Wonders will never cease! Clermont Onslow turned up again! True as there's a heaven

above us! In London this afternoon, Wednesday. These eyes saw him—this right hand grasped his tight in it. Are you satisfied? Thought, as a friend, I'd be the first to congratulate your Lordship. Will leave London to-morrow by cock crow, for your embraces. I can fancy your Lordship's emotions. The Lost One Found!! Joy, joy!! Set the bells ringing—Oh, happy Cecil!! Oh, happy, happy Annie!!

WIDE AWAKE.

The letter bore no date, nor address, nor seal, nor sign whatever but the London post mark. It might be only a silly hoax; yet, there was a something about it made Cecil Fitzherbert—and he had an unerring eye—turn pale and tremble while he read it. What was there, in Heaven's name, to tremble at? Still, he did tremble, and with an emotion, too—as, with his back against the window shutter, he kept looking at the paper, biting his under lip till the blood came—was something novel, in his Lordship, to behold.

A drop of blood trickled down his Lordship's chin. Mechanically he wiped it off with his cambric pocket-handkerchief—looked at it—and a ghastly smile played over his handsome features as he looked. Another, and another. Those blood-spots, dotted over his handkerchief, seemed to amuse his Lordship; and for some minutes he was absorbed, apparently, in counting them.

At length, Dinah's footsteps on the landing, taking

in the chocolate, recalled him to himself. The blood still trickled on. His Lordship poured out some cold water in a basin—bathed his face till the blood stopped—arranged his hair a-fresh—put on a clean collar—went to a bureau drawer—unlocked it—took out some bank-notes, and gold, and silver—re-locked it—put them in his pocket—once more unfolded the letter—read it again from beginning to end—tore it in pieces—gathered up the fragments—threw them into the grate, thrusting them down among the coals and cinders as if the very look of them were poison to his sight—and, leisurely descending to his breakfast, rang the bell—ordered Di to be ready in an hour—and, setting to—never had Mr. James Lambert remarked his Lordship "to have had a better appetite, nor been in gayer mood."

The breakfast and *The Times* over, up went Lord Fitzherbert to his mother; and, imprinting a filial kiss of unusual fondness on her cheek, sat down, till Di was ready, at her bed-side. The load at her heart was bile—nothing else. It was the preserved currant tart and cream she ate yesterday. Dunlop would set her to rights in no time. She looked beautiful—his own dearest, best of mothers, nevertheless!"

Di was waiting.

"How—go—leave her without a mother's parting kiss—a mother's blessing? No—no—there—there, that made him happy—oh, how happy! Nay, nay

—he was quite well—quite—quite! One kiss more —one—two—three—four—there, was that enough? Now, he would take a canter over to Bonnington—return home, he thought, by Marksbury—perhaps dine there—he didn't know—she mustn't wait dinner for him if he didn't come in time—nor—nor—mind —promise him that—eat any more of that nasty currant tart."

Leaving Fernleigh some half mile to the left, Lord Fitzherbert turned Di's head in the direction of Thorney-brakes; looking in at several cottages by the way—gaining golden opinions wherever he shewed his face, and blessings out of number on his noble heart as he rode along that day, must have been very gratifying to his feelings. Indeed, so abundantly open had been his Lordship's heart and hands, since his mother's sojourn among them at Fernleigh, that not a cottage for miles round but rang with his praises, to such an extent, that—for good deeds need no trumpeter—in the natural course of things they very soon reached the Vicar's ears, and, reaching them, and Esther's, and all of them, how was it likely they could be long kept hidden from Mr. Jennings' and Mrs. Hopkins', or, before nightfall next day, from gossips Tabitha's and Selina Manning's; and, thus set going, who was to prevent, we should like to know, Lord Fitzherbert's being the first and foremost name on every tongue?

Such good deeds do not miss of their reward. It was this that, drawing Annie out of herself, as it were, did more for Cecil in her estimation than all his blandishments of rank, or looks, or language put together. Those scarcely had the fair weight with her, possibly, that they were worth; but his quiet, unostentatious charities came so immediately within her own province, touched so nearly on her own especial ground, awakened and kept alive a sweet chord so in unison with the tenderest melodies of her own kind, feeling heart, that, had he possessed no other claims on her gratitude, they would have had charms irresistible. And, thus influenced, she would go with him and Bella on his Christian missions, be the almoner of his little secret generosities with her own, pointing out where to give, and where the too much to withhold. And there was the difficulty—not where to give, with that noble, sensitive, over-abounding heart, could never do enough; but how to withhold the overplus, with those ever open hands so liberally full, and that heart so flowing over!

And, with such an almoner by his side, well might Cecil wish "he had untold treasures at his command, that, together united, hand in hand and heart in heart, in such a glorious cause, they might go on treading the same sweet flowery paths of Christian charity and love—must lead some day, if not quite just yet, to the reward laid up for the portion of the few;—at all

events, till that came—to a Heaven on earth, in his mind's eye, no safer and surer than which could he conceive man could wish to have, wherein to fit him for the Heaven to come."

Having given full scope to his generous emotions that morning as he rode along, and cleared the village, Lord Fitzherbert turned off into a by-lane skirting the common on the left, and leading by a shorter cut of some half mile than along the highway to the Bonnington road; when, pulling up, he struck off quite in an opposite direction, and, after a round canter of about ten minutes, under cover of a long belt of thick copse land dividing the road from the common nearly as far as Thorney, gave Di an easy leap or two across country, and in five minutes more stood at young Jem Shipton's cottage.

Jem was at home, doing some gardening, while Betsy got the dinner; and, giving Di's bridle to young curly poll, now grown such a great big brawny boy he could hardly believe his eyes, Lord Fitzherbert walked cheerily in; and, taking a seat unceremoniously by the fire, put Bet at her ease in a moment with his pleasant easy chat.

Jem, as usual, was out of work. No fault, of course, of Jem's. Would be glad of a job, anyhow, to earn an honest shilling. Had been out of work three weeks, and looked pale and thin and haggard; Betsy down, and dull, and snappish. Jack was lying

curled up in the corner, with one eye open, watching, we suppose, the pot boiling, and wondering—when little Jem, outside, had done with it, whether there'd be a bit left for him or not. The only living thing looked happy like was the sky-lark at the door. He seemed jolly as ever, spite of all, never without *his* oasis; and, getting up, Lord Fitzherbert dropped him some biscuit bits from his coat pocket, which pleased Bet mightily, and got them a song two minutes afterwards from Pipes, as the sun burst out, was quite enlivening to hear.

"Ah, Jack, old fellow! and how goes the world with you?" said his Lordship, reseating himself, and eyeing poor Jack's lean lanky ribs with a pitying look. Thus encouraged, Jack got on his legs, and taking a circuit without Nan noticing him, quietly sidled up against his Lordship's chair, and, getting his nose under his elbow, looked up devotedly into his noble face.

"Poor old boy!" smiled his Lordship, stroking his shaggy neck.

"The impudence! Get down!" cried Betsy, snatching up a billet from the ingle-side, to enforce obedience. "You would, would you?"

"The oudaciousness!" laughed Jem, who loved the dog next his wife and child.

"Let him be," said Lord Fitzherbert, searching in his pocket for some biscuit.—"Poor old fellow! he looks hungry."

"Mayhap, not unlikely," said Jem. "He'll get a shave off, by, p'raps, woan't he, Bet?"

"P'raps—if he behave hisself—not 'less," answered Bet.

"Hang un!" growled Jem; "doan't fret about he. Him know—doan't un?—I know he doo—where to get *his* dinner when he wants it—leave he alone for that."

"And his master's, too," thought Lord Fitzherbert, glancing at the pot—for which poor Jack might well have a wistful eye. "Can he fetch and carry?"

"Fetch and carry? Lord bless 'ee!" cried Jem; "chuck un a halfpenny, Nan, and let his Lordship see."

Nan—the colour rising to her cheeks—dived a hand down into her gown; but, Jack getting impatient—not to keep him—Lord Fitzherbert drew a shilling from his waiscoat pocket; and, pitching it into the further corner, Jack gave a spring—nosed it out—picked it up; and, returning with it to his Lordship, dropped it into his open hand.

"Well done! by Jove!" laughed his Lordship, shying the shilling again to the other side of the room. "There, keep it for your pains, old chap; nobly earned, by George! and go ask Jemmy to run to the butcher's and buy you a sheep's head for your supper with it."

Jem's eyes glistened. Jem had a heart in his breast, hard as it was, if for nothing much else, a heart for his dog had Jem. Yes, and so had Betsy,

come to the truth of it; for what was there in the pot that day and whose bed-fellow, for hours together often while she was out and about, and father away, was Jack?—ask Jemmy, then. Yes, and with eye like his, do you think Lord Fitzherbert couldn't see it all too? Of course he could.

How, at the worst, things do often mend in this changeable life! Who had known that for a fact oftener than Jem and Betsy? which made Jem "never say die," and Nan the pattern poacher's wife she was. That morning, when they opened their eyes, and sent Jemmy to the cupboard, where were their hopes? There, bubbling away over the embers, in the shape of—but that's not our affair—something, that's pretty evident, for dinner, that smelt nice and savoury enough; though whether enough of it, after Jemmy had licked the platter, for that bone running in poor Jack's head is another matter we are not in a position positively to decide.

But, staunch and stubborn as was Jem, like his father, and "true blue to the backbone" as was Betsy, never "saying die" while a breath was left—the chapter of accidents—the chapter Jem and Nancy were better versed in than all the others in the book of daily life—had never brought them such good luck as this fine day; when, after half an hour's agreeable confab with closed doors—Jemmy minding his precious charge, like a good boy, up and down outside,

Lord Fitzherbert rose, and, putting five guineas into Jem's hand—"that's a bargain, then," said his Lordship. "At three o'clock to a moment?"

Jem, fairly astounded, could hardly speak for a minute; till, catching a look of reproof from Betsy—

"Done, and thank'ee!" said Jem, spitting on the coin and putting it into his pocket.

'Twas enough. Lord Fitzherbert knew his man; and, "tipping" curly-poll with a bran new half-crown, off cantered Di to Bonnington. While back bustled Betsy to rake up the embers, while Jemmy ran round to gather a handful of dry sticks in the outhouse, and his father up-stairs to shave and wash, and, otherwise, while Bet got dinner ready, to put himself in fit trim for the grand company he was to meet that day; Jack, meanwhile, smelling something in the wind, rousing himself and smilingly wagging his tail, as Nan patted his dear old head and neck, sure that those tender looks and loving words meant more than empty praise, and that, 'if he behaved hisself,' there really was a sop in the pan that day for him as well as others.

It had been a day of strange events and strong emotions this no less at Marksbury than at Fernleigh. It never rains but it pours, some say. Among the Parsonage letters was one from Linwood, to say Peter Worthington had had another fit, was confined to bed, and the doctor looking grave. Here was

quite enough for the Vicarage breakfast table that morning. The Vicar had not been so affected and cut up for many a day. "His dear old friend Peter, his school-fellow, his college chum, his oldest, warmest, staunchest, best of friends! Heaven preserve him! His had been a good, long, useful, Christian's life. Honourable and honoured were such grey hairs. He had done his work, and done it well. Blessed were such works!—thrice blessed their reward!!"

Esther said *amen!* and said it from the bottom of her soul; but there was a sigh, and a tremulousness of the voice as she spoke, understood by more than Aunt Gerty, called the tears into Annie's eyes, which were the first she had shed now—oh, we cannot exactly say for how many weeks past, and which Bella was the only one interpreted wrong. And the Vicar was inconsolable! And Dunlop could this time give him but little hope. And Jennings was "not at all surprised; nor Hopkins neither." And the poor Vicar could find no comfort anywhere; so, "after luncheon, would take his stick in one hand and Bella in the other, and go across and have an hour's chat with Lady Fitzherbert at 'The Cottage;' and, may be, stop, and take a mutton chop with her. The change would do him good; and, meanwhile, Esther would see and have some macaroni with the new Parmesan ready, in case Lord

Fitzherbert should come in and take a bit with them."

Then—*mirabile dictu!* will it be credited, it had somehow transpired, through Tabitha Ludlam, or Selina Manning, or somebody else, nobody could say whom—indeed many refused flatly to believe one word of it—that, only the day before, walking home with her, Huntworth Lowndes had actually come to the scratch and made Rosalie an offer! Here was enough, too, in all conscience to set all Marksbury a-talking; let alone the Vicar and Peter Worthington, and the Linwood living, and Lord Cecil and poor Annie's little mutual almonries, just then fresh upon the *tapis*.

The story—which, by the bye, unless hedges, as they say, have eyes, and ditches ears, it is very puzzling to make out how anybody could possibly get at—went thus:—It seems Miss Rosalie had been up to Hazelcombe the day before on one of her old begging expeditions, with her usual success there's little doubt; and, though indignant enough to be fleeced after that fashion, somehow, Huntworth would see her, at all events, to the wood gate home; "and, if ever she came there again for a month, at least, with her bobs, and courtesies, and beggar's whines, see if he wouldn't have her well trounced, as sure as his name was Huntworth. He was only sorry the Squire had done away, just like him, with the stocks."

Having reached the wood gate;—"good-bye," said Rosalie, holding out her hand. "You'll shake hands and make it up, then, won't you?"

Huntworth took her hand.

"Good-bye," repeated Rosalie, stealing a look up into the Beagler's face, and making the slightest possible effort to withdraw her hand.

"Good-bye," said Huntworth; but still holding two fingers tight in his. "What a great hurry you're in to-day."

"You told me to be off, didn't you?" reminded Rosalie, letting drop her eyes upon the ground, and poking her toe with the ivory handle of her parasol.

"You are excessively obedient this morning," smiled Huntworth. "Go, then."

"Please to let me."

"No—dash me then if I will!" cried Huntworth, glancing round him, and in a tone brought Rosalie's eyes up into his face again;—"see if I will, for your impertinence—till—till—you've answered me, you incorrigible little torment!—one question?

"What is it?—make haste!"

"Oh! if you're in such a fidget, it'll keep till another time, I dare say."

"Delays are dangerous. As you please."

Huntworth started, as Master Thrush, scared by something had suddenly disturbed his noon-tide carol, flew over their heads.

"What are you frightened at?" asked Rosalie.

"Frightened, you ninny?"

"Yes—how you started."

"Did I?"

"Well—what is it? Are you going to tell me?"

"What is it!" repeated Huntworth, tenderly—so tenderly! that his deep masculine voice almost faltered, at least, so it seemed to Rosalie's ears, almost faltered with emotion. "What is it? And you don't know, then?"

"How should I?"

"How should you? You arrant little hypocrite! Havn't I a good mind, then, not tell you, for such a wicked—"

"Fie, fie—for shame! Do—tell me—do—and let me go."

"Hark!"

"Make haste — there's twelve striking, I declare."

"There's no Missus, then, at Hazelcombe."

"Can't any one see that?"

"What's to be done?"

"Get one, I suppose."

"Get one! Where?"

"Where? I really pity you."

"You do?"

"You know I do."

"That's next door, isn't it—to—to—love?"

"Love!—Heavens! Oh, no—I never said anything about *that*."

"Yes, yes, but you did—you have—you have a hundred times!" cried Huntworth, fairly caught, and snatching the incorrigible little bundle of mischief at the same moment to his breast;—"you have—by heaven! you have—and you know it—and now say so too,—if there's any truth in woman. Speak—tell me—poh! I know better than that—say—say you will—you will—now, won't you?"

"What—tell Mrs. Rodney? Yes, you see, then, if I won't."

"D——n Mrs. Rodney! God forgive me!" 'Twas out. There was no recalling—even though Heaven might pardon it.

"Hark!"—Ah! Master Thrush on the wing again? But what cared Huntworth now? The dread word was spoken—the pledge given—the final compact sealed for ever. "Poor Mrs. Rodney!"

Much as honest Huntworth owed Louisa Rodney, never felt he so inappreciably indebted to her as that day; and, getting home in a state of mind, for him, impossible to describe,—"no need to tell me. I see it all by your looks," said Louisa, pensively smiling as she met him at the door. "Least said, soonest mended. Well, wilful folk must have their way. As you make your bed, so must you lie. Only, you needn't have been so wrath with Mrs. Rodney."

So went the story, and so we give it, making no

question of its accuracy. Altogether, is it to be wandered at, if, with one thing or another, Marksbury was well nigh crazy like that sweet May morning?

The Parsonage luncheon was over, and the Vicar, with his tortoiseshell-topped stick in one hand, and Bella in the other, on his way, full of poor Peter Worthington to Lady Fitzherbert; Esther up to her ears in household duties; Aunt Gerty writing letters; while Annie, with Humphrey, was feeding the guinea fowls and silver pheasants, and wondering why Cecil had not been to see them all that day.

Her feathered favorites lacking nothing more, hardly knowing why, Annie passed through the shrubbery wicket, and, taking the path that led to the hill side, up came Nep after her bounding with joy at the thought of a social stroll. As he pushed his faithful old nose into her hand, Annie stroked his head, and, having twined a little wreath of May blossom round his collar, off he scampered afresh—then back again —then round and round—then again off;—looking back every now and then—enough to say, ah, there you are—you needn't fear I'll leave you; till a shrill whistle from the copse side ringing through the air, off he started full gallop along the slope; and, jumping up to Lord Fitzherbert—"ah, old fellow!" welcomed his Lordship, hastening his step to come quicker up with Annie; "this is kind of you. Down—down sir—there—that will do—I know you love me dearly."

"He is so rough," said Annie, after cordially shaking hands. "We shall never teach him good manners, do what we will."

"Never mind. Rough and ready. So they paint honesty ever. What a polished little gentleman, Mr. Waddle. With all his graces, may we say as much for him?"

"A very perfect little courtier, I'm afraid," smiled Annie.

"Not like our dear old Nep, eh?" said Cecil, throwing his stick down the slope for a long fetch; "all candour and above board; with his honest, hearty, big, broad grin from ear to ear when he laughs at you and shows his great clown's white teeth, that couldn't bite you, no, not if they tried."

"Not without good cause I'm sure," agreed Annie. "And then it would grieve him deeply to do it."

"Lucky dog!" sighed Cecil. "How proud he looks to-day, with his sweet Mistress' fond favours on him, don't he?"

"Have you been a long ride?" asked Annie, quickening her step a little.

"Only to Bonnington."

"There was some of your favourite macaroni for luncheon, had you come in. Dear mamma was quite disappointed."

"Ah, indeed? How kind! And disappointed was she? But only dear mamma?"

"Yes, I was, too, very!"

"Ah! Then am I, indeed, very, very sorry, too!"

"You lost a treat."

"Indeed! Not irrecoverably I hope?"

"Oh, no! She'll be here again on Monday."

"Ah? She?—who?"

"Poor Betsy Gibbs' girl—my pet, you know—to bring me—what do you think?"

"What?—A little heart overflowing with grateful thanks, I can fancy, for your goodness to her poor old father in his illness?"

"Oh, yes! a little heart brimful and over of those, be sure; but something else besides.—Guess."

"Impossible!"

"Another Paul and Virginia, then, to replace the lost ones. Wasn't that kind?"

"Can *they* ever be replaced?"

"*They?* No—never! But it was so kind—so thoughtful—so feeling! wasn't it?"

"It was, indeed!"

"Where is Nep gone?" asked Annie, glancing round her.

"Just off into the brambles there, after a rabbit."

"He won't catch it, will he?"

"Not he, don't be frightened. It'll give him a good run only."

"I feel I should faint—you may smile—if he brought it out now in his mouth."

"You must never be a country squire's wife."

"I never shall," was on Annie's lips, but they trembled; and, fearing to trust her voice, they walked on for some moments in silence.

"How beautiful the *Cuyp* looked just now as I came down the hill!" resumed Cecil, in a gayer tone. "How I longed for Walter Pemberton at my side! The effect of the sun aslant the copse—one-half of it in broad daylight, the other, in deep shadow, was so fine! I think Pemby's got something of the same sort among the 'sweet bits' he took up there."

"The sun's still full on the hill-side," replied Annie; "let's make haste, and we shall see it."

"But you'll be tired, I'm afraid."

"Oh, no! I feel I could walk all day long, and *never* be tired. Did you meet papa and Bella?"

"No; but I met Winkles, and he told me they were going to 'The Cottage.' To dine there, do you think?"

"Very likely. I hope they may—papa's so sad to-day. Peter Worthington has had another fit—a very bad one! Heaven grant he may get over it!" and Annie sighed deeply.

"Ah! I understand," rejoined Cecil, with the slightest dejection of tone; "you love old Marksbury better far than Linwood."

"Thousands of times told!"

"Yes, and so do I, a great deal!"

Another deeper sigh from the depths of Annie's bosom told how much she loved it!

"You are not ambitious. Preferments have no charms for heart of yours," said Cecil; "no charms to be compared with—"

"For mine? no, none!" replied Annie, sadly. "If it would make my dear father happier—"and Annie's thoughts took in a long past history of by-gone hopes for ever fled as she spoke—"if it would make my dear father happier—"but here words failed her for a moment, and her lips quivered;—"where—where's Nep?" she asked, tremulously, and, drawing her mantle closer round her, though the air was warm; "he must have gone back home? The wanderer! I'll give him a good lecture for deserting me."

As she spoke they had reached the hill top; when, turning the angle where the copse broke off for about twenty paces, and where there was a little intervening flat of emerald turf-land some ten strides square that joined the high road, "Ah, by George!" cried Cecil, stopping short, just as, rounding the corner, they came close upon a carriage and four post horses standing under cover of the hedge; "what, in the name of wonder, have we here?"

"Lost their way, perhaps," said Annie, her cheeks flushing, and then turning pale again as ashes; "or come up to look at the 'Cuvp,' may be. Let us go back."

Scarcely had Annie uttered the words, when, sliding noiselessly from the thicket, a coarse, rough, brutal looking fellow, of herculean frame, his face nearly buried in a Belcher handkerchief, stood unperceived behind her—gave a sharp shrill whistle, threw a cloak, the next moment, over her head—lifted her up in his arms like a child; and, without word or gesture, was bearing her to the chaise as fast as legs could carry him, when a stifled scream of terror and agony rent the air, when—out bounced Nep furiously from the copse side—gave a savage growl—and, springing at Jem's shoulder, there fixed his teeth, and tugged, and tore; till, losing his balance, with a horrible oath down came Jem to mother earth on his back with his fair burden over him.

The dog, quitting his first hold, now pinned down his enemy by the throat. The onset was fearful!

"D——" growled Jem, loosening his embrace of his prize, to get at his knife; "pull 'un off!—shiver his b— brain—dost hear—dost?—scrag 'un—h—seize ee—he's throttling 'un—kick 'un heart out!"

Up rushed Lord Fitzherbert to the rescue. His grasp, like a vice, was on the dog's windpipe.

"That's him!" cried Jem. "By the foot—bite 'un—bite 'un—harder—harder!" but not a minute more was left—hurrying footsteps were coming fast upon them.

"Fiends!" cried Cecil; "quick, quick!—stab him, curse ye! stab him—cut his throat—strike—quick!" and, lifting up Annie's all but lifeless form in his arms—his Lordship's foot was on the carriage step; the boys were in their saddles; weltering in his blood poor Nep lay groaning in the death struggle; Jem crouched hard by in a corner of the thicket;—when "hold!" called a hoarse voice almost breathless with emotion—the next moment a heavy hand was laid on Lord Fitzherbert's collar, while another simultaneously tore the cloak away:—

"Merciful God!" cried Clermont.

A harrowing scream followed—Cecil Fitzherbert was forcibly dragged back—reeled—letting fall his prize into the arms of Claude—recovered himself—stood for an instant glaring with the fury of a tiger at his rival—gave a tiger's deadly spring.—

Nobly Clermont stood the shock!

"Fiends of hell!" foamed Cecil, the froth standing on his lip. "You would have her—you would—would you? Beauteous Bride! Ha, ha, ha! Take her—take her!"

A bright poignard blade, drawn with the rapidity of lightning, flashed in the sun. There was a quick, sharp blow—a hellish laugh—again that harrowing scream!—a heavy fall—presently retreating sounds of flying wheels in desperate haste for life or death;—

while there, by the side of his loved master, knelt Claude, wringing his hands and tearing his hair like one quite frantic!

And, oh! where was Annie? There, on that loved spot, teeming with a thousand blissful memories, treasured beyond all others that the world could give her, and which should have been the first to have hailed their blissful restoration to each other;—there lying, without sense or motion, her head coldly pillowed on Clermont's bleeding breast.

CHAPTER XVI.

BITS OF BLUE PEEPING THROUGH.

WHITHER flew those red-hot wheels, tearing away, on—on—on, like mad, for life or death! lashing—spurring—goading, frantic on, at that infernal pace?

Reader, heard you never of that dark, dismal, dreary, region, far away in the darker, drearier mind's eye of the haunted fugitive from *self*—where not even *Thought*—so remote is it—can find a dwelling place?

For that flew the red-hot wheels so fast—on—on on! For that dark, dreary shadow, that dismal region unattainable urged Lord Fitzherbert on his phrenzied course—on—on—on—never stopping—on—on—on! Oh, for eagle's wings to set time and space at nought! Still, on—on—on—for that he, breathless, panted.

And found it?

Yes, found it—as did Cain.

Oh, what a *home sweet home!* for Clermont.

We have tried to sketch it, in faint outline, in its joy; but what pen can ever give idea the faintest of it in its grief and desolation?

Man's vaunted strength! Frail boast at best! At the strongest, most conspicuous its chief weakness. In the palmiest plenitude of its confidence how most palpable—how most pitiable its helplessness! Who need be told it? We see, we hear, we know, and acknowledge it at every turn; yet, we live, and think, and act, and plan, and plot, as if we had the mastery; as if victory waited on our beck and nod; as though the race were to the swift, the battle to the strong; as though there was no hand but our own could dash the cup from our lips.

At the sunniest, what is this our life but a passing scene of ever-shifting lights and shadows? How —with what wisdom look they at it, who make of it only a hot-bed for rich growths—a stage whereon to play first parts with best *éclat?* Its main business, whence its source? how carried on? Its sweetest pleasures, why pall they so soon? Its best lessons, how learnt so well as by affliction?

As Lancelot Lawton loved to teach—'Overclouded in a moment as the scene is, at the sunniest, who shall tell, at the happiest, what sorrow the next hour may have for us?'

We say, as the Vicar loved to *teach.*

Vicar Lawton was but mortal. There he was, himself, with his coveted cup of earthly joy all but brimful, and within lip's reach—how little thought he, while, with head *in nubibus*, he proudly sniffed the air—the precious prize all but clutched—the *summum bonum* of his dearest hopes attained—the goal of his ambition all but reached—the darling end so nearly gained,—that it was dashed from his closing grasp for ever! Yes; and brightest sparkled his eyes, highest heaved his chest, and lightest went his step, at the very instant the fatal blow was being dealt that levelled all his proudest hopes to dust!

And, in years after, when he could look back, and calmly, in the spirit he loved to preach and enjoin, the spirit of self-searching, and patience, and meekness, and submission, and resignation, think of the past; he would often say, on that spot which had been the grave of his ambition as well as its birth, as, with Walter Pemberton on one side and Clermont on the other, he would still lovingly linger away hours with his *Cuyp*, that now he would not have exchanged for all the pictures of the world;—"yes, yes, it is good for us, that we should be afflicted. How blind are the farthest seeing of us! Least of all, know we ourselves. I am chastened. Not in wrath, but in great Love and Mercy chastened. I thought I was whole where I needed a physician ·t. I could not see my own foul leprosy—

the plague spot clinging to me. I could heal others, myself I could not heal. It has pleased Him to remove my blindness. Rejoice with me, my children! It has seemed good to him to come in time to my help; to lay bare my wounds; to probe them to the quick—in great Love and Mercy to probe them—not in wrath. There is balm and healing in his every touch. Rejoice with me! I shall not now die in my leprosy. Of his great Love it is that I am chastened. He discovered the root of my malady. He took me in hand. He has vouchsafed to save me—and *I shall* be saved!"

It was about three years after the tragical scene recorded at the close of the last chapter — the yearning love for old memories led us one delicious summer's day again to Marksbury. The spirit of the 'light of other days' hung, to our vision, heavy over it, as we stood on the hill-top, screened by the luxuriant hazel-clumps, right and left, from seeming intrusion on his privacy, and saw the Vicar—certainly more bent and seemingly infirm than when we met him last, his flowing hair under his hat white as snow, and with an expression, though he often smiled, of fatigue and effort, as we thought, and, ever and anon, of deep meditation on his brow,—slowly ascending the hill side to 'the bower,' with the help of Annie's arm on one side, and Bella's

on the other, while Clermont, some paces in the rear, was culling into bouquets the double violets and scarlet pimpinellas we supposed were favourites of Annie's.

And, presently, the Vicar stopped, as if the fatigue of walking were too much for him, and Annie, taking off his hat to wipe the heat-drops from his forehead,—then was evident how the short lapse of but three winters had added as good as fifteen to his age. Sorrow of the deepest had been at the core there. Time alone had not wrought that change! And for a moment or two he stood as if irresolute—as if he would go on—and he would not; till Bella said something that called an approaching smile into his face; and, then, exchanging Annie's arm for Clermont's stronger right, and Annie linking her's fondly in his left,—they retraced their steps gently down the slope, and in a few minutes were hidden by the windings of the copse-walk from our sight.

The *Cuyp* had lost none of its pristine charms. On the contrary, a richer, deeper tone of beauty than ever was upon it. But the Vicar still stood before us—and the past—and the present—and the future claimed *their* dues. 'To-morrow—to-morrow!' and descending by the high road and taking the foot path across the meadows towards the village—though there were twenty other ways, had we felt so

minded, inviting us to cheerfulness—our heart *would* that day go and take its own; and presently we found ourselves in its pretty, peaceful churchyard.

We are not constitutionally of a melancholy turn; but we love a rural churchyard, especially if such as dear old Marksbury's. It breathes to us of many more things than death. There is nothing death-like in it. It is full of life—another life than this. You who bury your dead, and never, perchance, go near them more, till sepulchred by their side, will little understand us. But we love anything that breathes of a recollection of those once beloved; any little votive offering, any token that tells of the once warm heart, its still strong hold of us as ever. No matter what. The meanest flower, or bit of rag, or withered sprig, are full, to us, of good and tender meaning. The widow's mite, to Him who knows the motive, is worth a thousand of the costliest gifts of pompous wealth! We love whatever, in spirit, reunites the living with the dead. It is a sweet, holy, comforting union to our thought; in which we see not death, but a life, oh, in comparison with that of which we are so boastful, how immeasurably more to be envied, in its possession, are they, than we! So, on we passed from grave to grave. Few there that met our gaze, but claimed the tribute of, at least, a Christian brother's sigh. But there was one in, especial,

over which this was not the first time, in truest heart, we had let fall many a tribute tear.

Covered with a large flat stone, inclosed within an iron railing, under shade of two, as yet slender weeping ashes, planted by Annie and Bella's own hands, lay the Remains of ESTHER, THE BELOVED WIFE of LANCELOT LAWTON, Clerk. A modest tribute to her priceless virtues followed, in testimony of her rare worth, as a wife, a mother, a Christian friend and neighbour; needing nothing we could add to swell its praises.

Good, kind, Christian-hearted Esther! Her end was peace. If ever soul should find a place in Heaven, that soul was Esther's. What now were all the 'cares and crosses' had ever drawn a sigh or tear from that unselfish, generous breast? One less, and Esther Lawton had been less worthy than she was. She never heaved a selfish sigh, nor shed a selfish tear. "Like Peter Worthington's," as the Vicar said, "Esther's had been a long, useful, Christian, life. She had done her appointed work, and done it well. Blessed were all such works—thrice blessed their reward!"

We had tarried till the waning light warned us homeward. Casting many a fond, lingering look back —for how knew we that we should ever set foot on that ground more?—we passed contemplatively through the little folding gate, and, taking a circuit of the

village, came to its old, hospitable little Inn, opposite Tabby Ludlam's, where, days past out of number, we had delighted to lounge away many a jovial hour, after long morning's angle, over our tankard of pale home-brewed, and settle the affairs of the nation with our host. Now he, worthy man, was also gathered to his fathers; and sorely ever since had Marksbury felt his loss. But there was widow Jane, and a buxom widow was she. And Widow Jane knew as much as Barber Leete himself of old Marksbury's history, and all that concerned it for twenty-five summers past. And then and there, over our glass of grog, we learnt many things that balmy summer's night we sought to know, some of which, as appertaining to this our story, we think may likewise interest the reader; and with these our tale must close.

We learnt, "that it was long, very long after Lord Fitzherbert's terrible crime and flight, that Marksbury looked up again; long before a heart would be comforted, or an eye be dried; long before the Vicar, spite of all Dunlop's skill, could leave his room; Esther was seen abroad again; Lady Fitzherbert recovered her poor lost brain; Aunt Gerty was known to smile or heard to say a cheering word to any; Bella, exhausted with her ceaseless care night and day of Annie, was raised from *her* sick bed; long before Clermont's wound was healed, and the fresh

colour came back again to his poor, pale, thin cheeks; long before even Aunt Gerty could coax Walter Pemberton, for more than a few minutes breath of fresh air, from his sick bed-side; but longer far! before the shock of that day had, even in a measure, left Annie's trembling heart. For months and months there she lay, poor lamb!—struck down—senseless—helpless—all but idiotic, as they carried her to her room; there she lay with her poor, fevered, frantic brain, so that they dared not, at one time, leave her an instant by herself. Oh, it was heart-breaking to see and hear her!

But God was good! He never left his own. He heard their prayers. One day, after a deep, long sleep—so deep and long! but for the breath on the hand-mirror they held to her lips, nothing would have persuaded Clermont she was not dead, she woke, as if from a trance, well—perfectly well—and, to all appearance, without a recollection of the past. Oh, the joy in every heart that day! And, now, it was necessary they should take care that Clermont's senses, in his almost frantic happiness, did not forsake him. Dunlop had enough to do. But he did it, and did it well! And, now, Annie could even talk with Clermont calmly of that dreadful day; and, though the blood would leave her lips, and they would quiver slightly when Cecil's name was mentioned, not an angry feeling was there, not the

shadow of one, in her breast towards him; but never, since that, would she ever again go, without Bella, or Clermont with her, to look upon the *Cuyp*.

God was very good! There was joy and rejoicing, yet, for Marksbury as well as sorrow. Yes, it was much blessed! The warm suns, and gentle dews, and refreshing showers still fell upon it lovingly, abundantly as ever; merrily rung their harvest homes; their garner-houses groaned beneath their plenty; their fruits and flowers challenged any ten miles round; their song-birds, where were green lanes and groves so full of melody? where hummed such industrious honey bees? what brooks danced and babbled more cheerily? in a word, its lot was cast in a favoured clime; and, though it had sometimes its "cares and crosses," as Esther Lawton used to say, "and well for it that it had;" still, God, through all, was good! It was much blessed!—had much to be grateful for!"

Furthermore, we learnt, that, "scarcely had time, and Christian piety and resignation done their best to heal the wound so far, when Esther's spirit joined her darling boy's. How, Marksbury was again thrown, deeply sorrowing, into mourning; how, long, how, still to that day, how, till their own hour came, they should all mourn a loss could never, never be repaired! How, the poor Vicar broke under it; how, he strove his best, but how it touched every heart to

see those white hairs bowed down as they were before their time; how, turning a deaf ear to all dear friend Vaughan's pleasant portraitures of Linwood, 'false pride, and ambition—their deceitfulness and dangers!' were the favourite themes on which he now most loved to preach, how, they listened to him as to an oracle; for did they not know that every word came, genuine, from his heart?"

That, now Lady Fitzherbert and Bella lived entirely at the Parsonage; though seldom any one ever saw her Ladyship outside the grounds. Still, the world of good she did, no tongue could tell! They could sometimes almost think they had their good Esther again among them. And Miss Bella—what the poor would do without her, if they ever lost Miss Annie, was difficult to say.

That, Clermont, having succeeded to his mother's little property—Oh, how Fernleigh felt the loss of Lucy Onslow—only go to Fernleigh would you know!—having succeeded to her little all, which, to him, was wealth enough! had fixed his home among them at 'The Cottage;' 'and nothing,' he said, 'should ever tempt him from it.' That, *but one thing* was wanting to complete his happiness—not the Vicar's consent and sanction—no, no—he had long ago obtained them—and, if Tabitha Ludlam wasn't wrong, 'before harvest home again, mark her words! the Marksbury bells would be set ringing, and the bon-fires blazing,

and the ale taps flowing for more things than the Squire's wheat-sheaves, and the Vicar's barley-mow;' —*but one thing*—a new heart with his cousin Cecil.

Further, we learnt, that, "with his usual noble, spirit, Clermont had forgiven all his Cousin's sins against him; that he seldom reverted in any way to their Australian trip together; that he never mentioned his name, but with a hope that they should see him again among them, with the *new heart*, one of these days; at which Annie's eyes would fill with tears, and Bella heave sigh after sigh, which Tabby Ludlam said "spoke volumes to her mind." That, he had erected a beautiful and touching monument in Marksbury Church to his mother's memory; and another to his beloved friend, Andrew Brande, in his native village; and had put by the remainder of the nugget money, to go—when he could get Cecil's consent, which he did not despair of, whatever Aunt Gerty might say—to go towards the erection and suitable provision, with all convenient speed—but his Aunt was to know nothing about it—of ten pretty gothic cottages, at Castlemore, to be called THE EDITH ALMS-HOUSES; and which should—if he could have it so—be a conjoint present to her, some day, from them both.

That, it having somehow reached Lady Fitzherbert's ears, nobody knew how; "nothing," she declared, "had ever touched her heart more than this generous proof of her nephew's love and affection for her! that

the tears, of joy and sorrow combined, she had shed over the thought—bringing with it as it did a yet dearer—but, Oh, dare she encourage it?—a yet far, far more precious hope than all!—could never be counted! and would that day but come, might she but hope for that—ere her heart was quite broken—ere her eyes were closed for ever, and her tongue had lost its office—to see him once more again, her own dear child—her first—and last—in sin and sorrow, as in innocence and joy—still, still, her child—her own—her only one!—to see him by her side—reformed—contrite—a *new heart*,—as he once was—pure—without stain—to hear him call her mother—to feel the repentant tears upon her cheek—his kisses of filial love, as of yore, upon those lips—to see them all smile in brotherly and sisterly unity on each other—to, with her own, join their hands together—with her last breath to bless them all—her children;—O, might she but hope for that, she would try and shed no more tears; but bide her time in patience and submission, humbly trusting in His mercy and mediation, with Whom all things were possible, and in Whom alone was centred all her trust.'

And, till that happy day came—and "it *would* come," still persisted Clermont—and, if whispering winds told true, was not so far off, either, by many a month, as gossip Tabitha fancied,—till came that happy day, Lady Fitzherbert would make the Vicar-

age her residence; and Bella would never leave her to the last;—and then, if Cecil came not—if he *did* come, Heaven only knew what might happen—whether she would ever quite forgive him—whether she ought—whether she could—and, if she did, whether he had the heart to repay her as he ought; but *she* had a heart good and kind enough for anything—if Cecil came not, then there was the Moorfield little property, all her own, in the very bosom of her friends, and there she would go and live; and, whenever and wherever she went, might Heaven's best blessings ever wait upon her steps!

Then learnt we also, that, "now Mrs. Walter Pemberton, there was no end of the pretty pride and consequence of dear Aunt Gerty. That, at one time there was a doubt, a very great one, whether poor Walter wouldn't really have gone into a consumption, or committed some dreadful rash act some day, in his laundress' absence, so flinty and inexorable was Miss Gertrude, so obstinately determined never to leave her dear brother in his solitude; till the Vicar, getting her alone one day for half an hour in his study, so opened her eyes to the cruelty of the thing; and how it caused him more anxiety than enough, to see him getting so shockingly pale and thin, poor fellow! and how perfectly Jennings and Martha Hopkins understood his ways—that, at last, the day was fixed; and she had never once been

heard to repent of it, not she. That they lived in a sweet, sunny little house, somewhere near Hyde Park, 'the drawing-room balcony filled all the year round,' Humphrey said, 'with flowers and evergreens.' That, they would carry off the *flitch of bacon* to a certainty. That, courtier Waddle still reigned supreme, chief present pet; but that—or Tabitha Ludlam was out—'he wouldn't be much longer pet the first, which served him right for the airs he gave himself.' That, already Annie and Bella were hard at work on mysterious little costly-laced frocks and caps, nobody knew for whom. That, they had promised Clermont to spend a month, at least, out of every twelve, at the Parsonage and "The Cottage;" and then, of course, there wouldn't be for six weeks afterwards a gay heart in all Marksbury. That, Walter's highest ambition had been crowned—he had been elected, *nem. con.*, one of the Hanging Committee, yes, of Somerset House!!! and ever since—and it was very remarkable—ever since, not a picture of his own had got hung among the Dons.

That, now there was a Missus, too, at Hazelcombe, didn't things go on rather differently? Wasn't the old place quite a picture to behold? Didn't Rosalie Lowndes keep it up, that was all, in famous style? and keep him, too, in order? But did he mind it? wasn't Huntworth as proud as a Turk of his little wife? Didn't he give her all that gold

could purchase. And, with her great, bouncing boy, his father's very image, on Rodney's lap, crowing up in her face, ask Rosalie—say what nasty jealous, spiteful things they might—ask Rosalie, "whose lot she envied, then, in all Hampshire?"

And, further, that, "cheated out of Aunt Gerty, Dan Dunlop, to spite her, was turning tender eyes towards sweet Ann Bainbridge; and, couldn't any one see, but the Squire, sweet Ann was turning a tender eye on Dan? That, poor Grogram was really getting on again apace; that, whereas folks used to say, as Groggy rushed along on his legs, five miles an hour, the heat drops standing on his brow—"poor Groggy! there he goes, thinking he's providing for his family;" now, provide he did in sober earnest, enough, they said—and a little over, too, for the rainy day."

Then, that, "Claude, established in the Vicar's estimation, had taken unto himself, to wife, Mrs. Dinah Norton; both living, subject to Lady Fitzherbert for the present, at the Parsonage, till something better turned up, which her dear old friend Dr. Vaughan had promised to look out for—it being perfectly understood, that, at Lady Fitzherbert's death, they reverted to Clermont Onslow, to do with and provide for as in his wisdom and goodness seemed best for both their welfare.

That, Sam and Hannah—for we don't see why Sam and Hannah shouldn't be made happy as well as their

betters—following their example, at all events, had resolved, with the Vicar's sanction, to push their fortunes, too, hand in hand; and hitherto, they said, not a care—"nor anything like it," Sam said, "had ever crossed their path." But, then, to be sure, Sam was a very easy, yielding temper, which was a great blessing! and, though Hannah had "a sperit of her own, put her up—where would you see a tighter, tidier body anywhere, could do better with the little precious earnings, keep herself and her place more properer, and make college dumplings—Sam's favourites—every bit as well as Hopkins?"

That, poor old Nep had not been overlooked, but lay well cared for, under a green hillock in Annie's own garden, over which Clermont had written a little epitaph, which Dinah declared "did honour to his heart."

And, furthermore, that, 'it was said—and more shame for him!—that Nugent Harvey, shorn of every shilling of his own, now led a roving life, migrating principally between Germany and Belgium, with Charlotte Lennox, both cutting 'tremendous swells!' and getting a pretty picking at *écarté* and *the tables*. That, Nugent was grown fatter, less taciturn, sported an imperial and moustache, smoked a great deal, and was learning the guitar; and Charlotte *haut ton* at a rapid pace, as though she had been born to it. That, no one expected he could ever shew his face again in England. Hundreds had been ruined by him. Indeed,

he had narrowly escaped Norfolk Island, so they said. That, some thought he was married to Charlotte, others no such thing. But she was a very clever woman, and, whether or not, they, somehow, got received; a good deal, they said through Lord Somebody, who had a *penchant* quite for *blondes*, and patronized them. That, Charlotte had a snug little jointure, unfettered; dressed admirably; gave charming *petits soupers;* played, and sang divinely, a *soprano;* had an exquisite hand and arm, a ravishing little foot and ankle; loved Harvey to distraction;—and, as the best proof of it, had twice resolutely refused a whole beautiful set of ermines from his Lordship; and, that her Hubby might never want for anything, settled all her money upon herself.

That, some ugly stories had gone about—there was no knowing—they might be true, or they might not,—but some did say, he'd have been an upright, honest man, and well-to-do, would Nugent Harvey, at that day, if it hadn't been for Charlotte Lennox. There's where it was to get in the hands of a selfish, crafty woman. 'Twas a whirlpool! and he had sunk to rise no more! Only think—"Rich—he could never be hers. She would rather see him begging his bread from door to door, than, risen to opulence, he should ever look down with scorn and contempt on her. No, never! Rather than that, he should be dependent on *her* bounty for a crust."

That, Charlie Ferrers, now a gallant Major, had turned over a new leaf, and taken a fresh leave. That, his nose at length presentable, Cousin Rachel, kind, relenting creature! saw it in the right light; yielded to the force of first impressions; pitied more than blamed; listened—believed—forgave—said yes;—and, having paid all his debts *of honor*, that, now Charlie was an honest, happy man! and loving Rachel without a fault to find. That, some said, he owed it all to seeing an old chum die of *delirium tremens*, after frightful fits. That, "it made such an impression on him, he went home that evening quite an altered man! He should never forget it to his dying day. As he entered the room, poor Frank knew him in a moment, though he did not know, they said, his own brother; and, tearing the coronet of leeches from his bleeding temples, spite of all they could do to prevent him, kept throwing them, one after the other, at him, and laughing, and jabbering and swearing, and cursing, and blaspheming in the most horrible manner! his bloated, but ghastly face, streaming with gore; till, exhausted, he sank back, fighting the air, with a loud shriek, and died with a fearful imprecation on his lips." If Charlie "lived for ever," he said, "that terrible sight would never leave him!"

That, Arnold Webster, Bridget Crofts, and the Rooks still reigned, pretty well, *in statu quo*, supreme at Castlemore; except for a couple of days or so at

Lady-day and Michaelmas, when Houghton Palmer came down rent gathering, or, with a friend, pheasant and rabbit shooting for a week at Christmas; after which, the old place was dull and dismal again as ever; so much so, that, but for Bridget's tiny little smoke-wreath out of the eastern turret, you wouldn't have supposed there was living thing in it, or about it, but the rooks. That, Harry Block "would rather ride five miles round any day," he said, "without his dinner, than come agin that old Arnold's cross, mulberry nose, and Bridget's skinflint hagglings over the scrags of mutton."

And, with respect to young Jem, that "Justice at length overtook him, much to the satisfaction of every one but Betsy. That, caught at his old tricks, after a desperate conflict, and having nearly killed young Ben, he was safely shipped off, at last, beyond seas; and poor Betsy had none left but Jemmy and old Jack to comfort her."

"And Clermont—now that Annie—"

"Yes, yes; but widow Jane had not yet told us, how it was that Clermont arrived at the hill-top just in the nick of time."

"That was just what Jane Bailey was coming to in a moment. Well, then, he now often said, when talking of that dreadful day, that 'he could bear to think of it, and those harrowing screams, that pale cold cheek upon his heart, those closed eyes, as if in

death, and contemplate them calmly, nay, cheerily, in comparison with the thought—oh, agony! of the fate that had been hers, had not the finger of Heaven led him there in time.' They had reached Thorney-brakes, disguised, the better to enter Hazelcombe, unknown, before venturing on the Vicarage in conformity with Walter Pemberton's prudent plan, and were making for the ten-acre copse, for a shorter cut across, when a well, too well remembered voice, caught Clermont's ear, croaking her doleful ditty by the lane-side. Ah! those words—the very same—vivid in his recollection as of yesterday:—

"The cuckoo comes with his pretty song,
Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo:
To hear him, you'd think he could do no wrong,
He sings so loud, and he sings so long
His cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo."

Like an augury of ill omen sank those dismal words on Clermont's soul. He recollected the effect they had on him when he first heard them at the Parsonage gate, and a cold shudder crept over him at the thought. He tried to shut his ears against them—to ridicule—to laugh them off; but it would not do. The more he tried, the louder they rang in his brain, the heavier hung a dead, cold weight at his heart, and he felt his knees tremble under him as he walked. "Had the old hag discovered him? Her

eyes were everywhere. She seemed to read to the very bottom of his soul. Pshaw! what if she had?" he muttered to himself, while Claude seemed amazingly diverted with her vocal powers. "What a fool he was. Ha!—

"Maiden, the poor bird will tell thee best—
Hark! cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo—
There mourning the loss of his rifled nest,
Why hither he comes to enjoy his rest,
With his cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo?"

Strange! What meant the old wretch? and, throwing some silver into her lap as he passed, and pressing a finger to his lips to enjoin silence, on Clermont strode, scarcely knowing which way he went; till, suddenly stopping short—for he had taken the wrong path—he instinctively looked back to see if she was gone. No, plague take her! there she was still, rocking her decrepit, shrivelled body backwards and forwards; and strange!—what could she mean—still waving her skinny hand in that way, as if for greater haste, towards the hill-top?

Dizzy with the indefinite dread of some impending evil hanging over him, that brought the cold sweat again in thick drops upon his forehead, on Clermont plunged, quickening his pace, as that skinny hand seemed urging him quicker and quicker forward, almost to a run—Claude keeping up with him as best

he could, and laying it all to the maddening score of love; when, just as they had planted foot on the hill-side, within bow-shot of "The Bower"—O God! that piercing, harrowing scream would haunt him to the grave! The torturing agonies of that moment depict them who could? Heaven must have given him superhuman powers; else, beating as his heart did almost to suffocation, how could he ever have got there in time? Another minute, and he had been too late!'

"Yes, yes, it was the finger of Heaven! She, Jane Bailey had ever said, and ever would say—and there she quite agreed with Mr. Jennings, and Martha Hopkins—she had ever said, and ever would say—*'twas* the finger of Heaven, and no other, that brought him there in time."

"And did Jane Bailey really and truly believe that Lord Fitzherbert would ever return to them?"

"There was no telling. He might, and he might not. It was impossible to say. Great folks' hearts were so different to little. She didn't mean to say they had no consciences. But many of them—not all—she knew some, she could name, it was a treat to talk to, and do anything for; but some of them seemed to have no more heart, or feeling, or natural impulses in them than that broom-stick. They seemed to her—always to want to smother what was natural and heartfelt. If she were Lord Fitzherbert

—which she wasn't, and didn't wish to be—she knew well enough what she would do before another sun went down. Ashamed? The shame was continuing in sin, wasn't it, not quitting it for ever. There, now —was there one in the village would ever reproach him for coming back again to them? She knew better. There was no telling, however—great folks were such riddles! What they were made of always puzzled her. But this she knew for certain—there had been more than one foreign letter, with the Australian post-mark, for the Parsonage, within the last ten days. That looked something like, she thought."

"It did, indeed, look very like—like *home sweet home!* no question of it."

"It did. That was what Widow Jane was thinking. Tabby differed with her, and said it was only money-matters. But she knew better. Or, why all that grand bustle and preparation at the Vicarage? And Lady Fitzherbert, only the day before yesterday, arm in arm with the Vicar in the village, and not been outside the grounds before, now, come Michaelmas, for nearly three years and a half? Yes, and Miss Annie and Mr. Clermont again almost beside themselves with joy? and Miss Bella's handsome cheeks with quite a colour in them, too? and Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton coming down, they said, a good month before their time? and Huntworth Lowndes

running about and rubbing his hands half crazy-like?—yes, and Martha Hopkins and Mr. Jennings so mysterious; and Claude and Dinah so sly and saucy, too?"

"Yes, why, indeed?"

"She knew. They couldn't deceive Jane Bailey; and why should they? Something was in the wind, as sure as fate! She could see the *bits of blue peeping through*. 'Twas a long lane had no turning. For her part, she quite agreed with the Vicar—and she hoped he would preach them another sermon about it—she quite agreed—*It was never too late to mend*."

"That was true. An axiom most Christian, alike in practice as in principle. What said Miss Bella?"

"Said? Nothing. But didn't every look and action, with her, speak volumes. That was her character. There was more in one little action of hers than in a thousand words. Talk?—not she. But, law! how that generous heart did feel, and hope, and endure, and hope on, all to itself, who couldn't see who knew it? Not for itself alone—no, no! Ask the poor, who did *least* for them?—Those who talked *most*. Talk, and tears, and sighs for ever—what good were they? That's how it was with poor Lady Fitzherbert—always sighing, and crying—and see what a sufferer she was! No, it wasn't scorching, and

deluging for ever the hope-seeds with sighs and tears brought them up best and soonest, not it."

"Then, Jane Bailey really had good hopes? Only fancy, if, after all, Bella should wear the coronet?"

"And she would, or Jane was very much mistaken. Yes; and tell her of a head, or heart either, anywhere, would grace it better? Not but that Miss Annie's, come to that, would adorn a crown! But Providence knew best. One thing Clermont might to be sure of—he *was* sure of, with Annie—the humblest cot would be a palace of content!"

"Yes, yes;—but the Vicar—what thought the Vicar of it all?"

"Now, no doubt as a sensible man, and fond father, and Christian pastor ought to think. He had had *his* lesson. Who had not—come grey hairs, one way or the other?"

"Who indeed?"

"It wasn't, was it, while learning our lessons, they profited us most?" But when we *had* learnt them by heart; and well digested them, then it was we turned them to account, and found the good they did us."

"That was very true."

"Between ourselves, a more pious, painstaking, upright, honourable man didn't breathe than the Vicar. But the wisest had their weaknesses, their

darling sin, their 'plague-spot,' as he called it. And they couldn't see it. With eyes and understanding to see everybody else's faults and failings; had you asked him, times back, what was his own least sin—there, ten to one he'd have answered *pride*."

"Astonishing!"

"Yes; and with such a head! As Mr. Jennings said, 'there was no counting what he knew.' He could speak five languages, and, yet, couldn't see what was plain to her as the nose on her face, and she could hardly speak her own as should be. That was so odd! A more ambitious man had never walked the earth, and more was the pity! with all his learning, all his lectures against false pride, all his love for his *Cuyp*, his church, his parsonage, and flock, and all about them, and he did love them in his heart, she believed sincerely—than Lancelot Lawton; and, yet, wise as he was, he didn't seem to know it. Poor man! how blind the best of us!"

"And now—"

"Now, she, Jane Bailey, really and truly believed, and that was true—not a heart—not even Lady Fitzherbert's, poor thing,—nay, not even Miss Bella's own, God bless her! would leap with more true joy—though his grand dreams were all over—than the Vicar, at the Prodigal's return."

"Prodigal! Ah! if that were all."

"Well—the more need of repentance. Yes, and

come that—and, mind, from what she'd heard, she solemnly believed it had—come that, of mercy and forgiveness. Wasn't that Christ's law — Christ's love? Didn't He say, *Come To Me*, ALL? It wasn't, was it, *could* they come? but *would* they? That's what the Vicar said; and she believed it. Yes, and come that—come the *new heart,—Though their sins were as red as scarlet, they should be made as white as wool.*"

"And Castlemore?"

"Ah, that had been a sad affair! Nearly ruined his poor mother. How a child could be so wicked and cruel? And such a mother! That was how it was—she had spoilt him. His own father had predicted, unless kept a tight hand over, he would break her heart some day. And he *had* nearly."

"But about Castlemore—there was, still, enough."

"Yes, and over, with good care. Enough, if they'd make it so. There's where it was. Great folks were riddles to her! Never contented. Either always too much, or always too little—never enough."

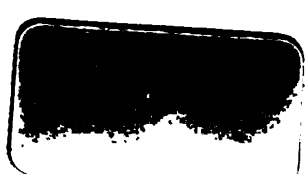
"And, if Lord Fitzherbert came back, would he go Castlemore?"

"He might, or he might not. Jane doubted it. 'Twas a *hunked* place, and Lady Fitzherbert couldn't endure it. She often said she would end her days in Marksbury. There was no saying for certain—great folks were so changeable! But there'd be

enough—plenty—know how to use it only—be as it might. Then, there was Miss Bella, bless her heart! she'd be a princely fortune in herself! There was no knowing for certain—great folks were not like little ones. But, come that day—she did think—if only for dear Miss Bella's sake—she should cry her eyes out for joy."

"Then, she loved him still, as ever?"

"Loved him? Aye, didn't she, spite of all?—truly, fondly, faithfully, devotedly as woman's heart could love! Loved he her but half as much—and, mind, Jane didn't say he didn't—loved he her but half as much, with the same fond, faithful, unselfish heart,—and, with God's blessing, a happy man might yet be Lord Fitzherbert."

THE END.

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